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[MUTUAL CONFIDENCES!]

EILEEN'S ROMANCE.

CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. ERNESCLIFF, her two sons, and Lucy Courtenay returned to Blankshire very soon after the Desmonds deserted Rue Rooroi.

Lucy, of course, was restored to her parents, who—since her wedding-day was not two months distant—were not disposed to part with her any longer.

Courtenay Hall was not three miles from the Ernesccliff's comfortable new house, so that the lovers were able to see a great deal of each other, and Mr. and Mrs. Ernesccliff were able to give themselves up to the considerations of their younger son's peculiarities, which just then were causing them a good deal of anxiety.

Self-made people, they were neither vulgar nor uneducated, and, unlike most of those who have risen in the world, they attached no undue importance to their wealth.

Mr. Ernesccliff's first step when prosperity came was to settle a handsome income on his

wife, his second to insure his life. He made money with surprising ease, and having no very extravagant tastes he contrived to keep it. His sons received first-rate educations.

By the time Alan was of age it was apparent he would not need to work for his living; but Alan, himself declared against an idle life, and had chosen to read for the bar. He was just "called"—would very likely never make a hundred a year by briefs, but yet intended to do his best.

His father, meanwhile, proud of his sterling common-sense, had bought a snug villa at Kensington, and furnished it for the happy pair to begin their married life in, settling ten thousand pounds on the portionless bride, and agreeing to allow them twelve hundred a year.

Thus Alan's prospects were of the smoothest. He might never become famous as a barrister, but he had an honourable profession to interest him, a nice home, and—in the future—a very pretty wife.

Some day, when kind John Ernesccliff died he would succeed to The Towers and a large income. He was, moreover, one of those men

sure to get on, who never hope inordinately and never despair.

He had never caused his parents a day's anxiety, whereas, ever since he was eight years old, Bob had kept them in spellbound amazement by his exploits, until it came to be understood that nothing but the unexpected could be looked for from him.

He was not vicious. Mrs. Ernesccliff, in speaking of him to Lady Constance Courtenay, declared, with tears in her eyes, no one ever had a better heart, a kinder soul, than Bob.

He was not stupid, since he passed all his examinations respectably, if not with *éclat*, but he was given to the most wonderful schemes which never succeeded, and, later on, to the most romantic love affairs, whose passionate intensity was only rivalled in extent by their brevity.

Bob's own prospects were not despicable. He was in the army, and, at present, had six hundred a year besides his pay. His father had offered to increase his allowance if he married, and it was understood meant to provide for him liberally in his will; besides

which Mrs. Ernescliff's settlement provided that all her money reverted at her death to her younger son, so that Bob was very far from being a detrimental.

But of the nineteen love affairs with which Basil had reproached him, not one had ever lasted long enough for Mr. and Mrs. Ernescliff to think seriously whether their consent would be asked.

Bob's early fancies were not for very desirable persons; and, as his brother always said, the most satisfactory thing about them was their abrupt ending, which always came before the young sultor had mustered courage to ask the decisive question.

Mrs. Ernescliff had hoped the attachment to Miss Desmond was as transitory as its predecessors.

She parted from Bob at the little Westerton station the day he rejoined his regiment, pretty easy in her own mind that the beautiful stranger of Boulogne would soon be replaced by a twenty-first attachment; but three weeks later a letter reached The Towers from Bob's friend, Captain Donald (after Basil Courtenay his greatest "intimate"), suggesting that the young lieutenant was anything but well, and that really some of his people should look him up. They had better not mention the warning they had received, but if they could find time to call on the writer (Captain Donald) he would give them further particulars.

Motherlike, Mrs. Ernescliff would have flown to her boy at once, but she was quickly overruled by her husband.

The letter was so vague, he could form no clear idea of what was amiss; so he determined to go himself, and insist on Bob's consulting a doctor, and if that functionary advised it, striving to obtain another leave of absence for that erratic young gentleman, and bringing him back to Blankshire.

A man of method, he telegraphed to Captain Donald his intended arrival, and asked him to meet him at the Grosvenor Hotel, since he preferred to know as much as possible before seeing Bob.

Captain Donald, a very pleasant, outspoken young officer, was at the hotel within an hour of Mr. Ernescliff's arrival.

"I'm really sorry if I've alarmed you," he said, simply; "but I felt something must be done. He couldn't go on at this rate. I should say he spends every moment he's not on duty in tearing through London in cabs; or worse still, in taking suffocating journeys in the underground railway. He gives himself no rest. It's enough to wear out a man of iron."

Poor Mr. Ernescliff looked bewildered.

"Do you mean he's ill?"

"He looks as if he'd been up for weeks. You see, sir, it wouldn't tell on anyone used to late hours and a perpetual round of dissipation. But Bob's one of the quietest, most regular fellows going, and so the result of this new freak is that he looks haggard and done up. I've remonstrated with him myself, but it's no use. He says he's bound to go. Week-days and Sundays, it's just the same. He doesn't absent himself from his duties, but even then he seems lost in a brown study. One or two of us have noticed it. He's just travelling mad. It seems to me he can't rest."

"Is it debt?" asked poor Mr. Ernescliff, in despair. "I have always given him a fair allowance, and he never asked for more."

"It's not debt. It's more like a desperate search for something he can't find. I don't for one moment mean his mind is unbalanced. I merely think he is desperately excited about something and that if he isn't calmed down he'll have brain fever."

"I had better go to him at once?"

"You won't see him if you do. I saw him flying down Knightsbridge on his way to the station as I came here. Depend upon it he won't be home till ten at soonest."

Mr. Ernescliff saw the uselessness of visiting his boy's rooms, and asked Captain Donald to dine with him at the Grosvenor. He was

very much taken with the young captain, who never attempted to conceal his friendly interest in Bob.

"You know, sir," he said, as he took leave, "they say it's always one of three things when a man is running wild—cards, horses, or a woman. I am sure it is not cards. I doubt if he ever played for money in his life. I never knew him care for horses, but you know he has been in love on and off ever since I knew him."

He was no sooner alone than Mr. Ernescliff had guessed the enigma. Bob was looking for Miss Desmond. He had, his mother and Alan confessed, been deeply infatuated with her. She was beautiful, refined and elegant. The strange mystery of her disappearance would throw a halo of romance over her. The poor old gentleman, who had made his money in trade, and never believed in anything but facts, wondered what on earth he and his wife had done to be given such a romantic visionary of a son.

He reached Bob's chambers about ten, assured the astonished factotum who admitted him there was nothing wrong at The Towers. He had been dining with a friend, and had just looked in to see Mr. Robert. He would wait till he came in. No need to trouble about a room for him. He had engaged one already at the Grosvenor.

The servant, who knew Mr. Ernescliff well, never attempted to dispute his wishes. He stirred the fire into a blaze, lighted the lamp and withdrew.

There was nothing about the room to make a father anxious as to its owner's habits. It was fearfully untidy—but everyone who had met Bob once could imagine he had no bump of order—but there was nothing of dissipation or recklessness in the untidiness. Portraits of Mrs. Ernescliff and Lucy were on the chimney-piece. Boots, spurs, and walking sticks had wandered into the room without exactly knowing where to place themselves. Pipes, cigars, and match-boxes were there in plenty, but the place of honour on the writing-table was occupied by a bulky red volume which, on examination, proved to be a post-office directory.

Opening it with natural curiosity John Ernescliff came on a sheet of paper in his boy's handwriting. It was nothing but a long list of addresses, each prefaced by an initial, and sometimes by Mr., Mrs., or Miss.

A light broke on Mr. Ernescliff. He referred to the dictionary and understood all. Within a twelve miles' radius of Charing-cross there were upwards of three hundred families of the name of Desmond. Bob had indeed given himself the Herculean task of discovering which contained his charmer.

In his simple way the poor fellow had forgotten one fact, that as the Directory was published in January, when Maude Desmond lived in Boulogne, his search was practically useless; but perhaps he had gathered from the French landlady she was going to her relations, in which case his long and onerous efforts might succeed.

Judging from the paper, he had shown a good deal of practical shrewdness in the search, for all those Desmonds living near each other were bracketed together. Thus there were two Desmonds at Richmond, one at Mortlake, and three at Putney. These formed one division; Brixton, Clapham, and Camberwell in like manner formed another coterie.

And there was a carefully planned calculation on the reverse side of the paper, that at the rate of ten a week the list might possibly be got through in about seven months.

Mr. Ernescliff had just taken in the magnitude of the scheme when the sound of a latch-key proclaimed Bob's return. He came straight to his own den, and his father felt thankful he had not let his wife accompany him, for he never saw anyone so changed as poor Bob in the three weeks of his self-imposed labours.

He was fair-complexioned—and such men show fatigue or anxiety sooner than others. There were dark rings under his eyes, his

cheeks looked hollow. He was as careworn and haggard as though he had been haunted by some stupendous anxiety.

He almost staggered with fatigue, and had thrown himself wearily into his arm-chair before he seemed even to perceive his father.

"My dear Bob, what's the matter?"

"I'm a little tired," confessed Bob. "I've been out making calls, and it's hard work. I'd no idea you were in town!"

The servant brought in a basin of soup, which he placed before his master; it was flanked by a large glass of claret and water. Certainly poor Bob's refreshment was of a very harmless character.

"I have been dining out with a friend," replied Mr. Ernescliff. "Eat your supper, Bob; you look done up."

"Pretty well," replied Bob, turning his attention to the soup with great good will. "Seven trains and two cabs; that's pretty well for one night."

His father would not interrupt him until he had finished his refreshment, then he said simply,—

"My dear boy, don't you think you are acting rather like an idiot?"

"I know I'm not, clever," returned Bob, with perfect good temper, "but I haven't been doing anything remarkably stupid lately."

"Only wearing out your strength in a wild-goose chase. Don't think me inquisitive, but I took up this book," putting one hand on the directory, "to while away the time, and I couldn't help seeing how you were passing your leisure."

"I shall do it in time," said Bob, resolutely. "No one could expect to succeed in a hurry; besides, I can't go to work bodily and call on the people. I have never been properly introduced to her, though I did speak to her when her sister was drowned. All I can do is to find out how many daughters such Desmond has, and what their names are."

"Robert, do be sensible! Am I to understand you have set your heart on marrying this girl of whom, please remember, you know nothing save that her father lived in obscurity in Boulogne?"

"I knew a great deal more than that. I spoke to her once, and I know she was brought up in London, and that she was a great deal. She only came to Boulogne to take care of her father and the little girl; her father was a soldier."

"My dear Bob, if she had been anyone worth knowing would she have gone off to Boulogne?"

"I think so. She did not exactly tell me, but she implied her father would one day be quite an important person, and then they would all go back to England."

"Look here, Bob, did I ever break my word to you?"

"Never."

"Then promise me to give over this wild-goose chase, and as soon as your brother is married, and the wedding is off my mind, I will try and find out Miss Desmond, on the express understanding, of course, that you do not move in the matter meanwhile?"

Bob shook his head.

"You could never do it; you've no idea what hard work it is."

"I did not mean to get to work in your way. I shall just put the matter in my lawyer's hands, and ask him to discover the young lady's address. If she turns out to be a gentleman and of respectable antecedents, I promise you, Bob, your mother and I will try to become acquainted with her. Now will you give me your word to behave rationally?"

Bob gave it readily, but whether the reaction was too much for him, or he had really worn out his strength, he leaned back in his chair, and in five minutes was sleeping as peacefully as a child.

Mr. Ernescliff himself found repose a difficult matter, when he at length reached the bed he had ordered at the Grosvenor. Rightly or wrongly, he stood committed to consent to receive Miss Desmond as a daughter-in-law,

provided only she proved respectable—an adjective, as he well knew, capable of very elastic meaning.

Still he could hardly have left poor Bob to kill himself by his frantic search, and there always remained the chance that when, once discovered, the young lady might disenchanted Bob as swiftly as her nineteen predecessors did in his affection.

He called on the surgeon attached to his son's regiment the next day. He found to his relief that that worthy man was fully alive to the young lieutenant's state of health, and so it was not difficult to get from him a statement which, conveyed to the proper quarter, would result in an extended leave of absence.

As Bob had hardly been back a month it was hardly fair, perhaps, for him to have another holiday; but his haggard face and strange, excited manner had been marked by the colonel.

Mr. Ernescliff was known as a sensible father, not likely to take alarm easily, while Surgeon-Major Armstrong said plainly Robert Ernescliff seemed to him on the high road to brain fever, so that the affair was not very difficult to arrange. And when in the early days of October the master of The Towers went home, he took the young prodigal with him, and also the consolation that Bob's services would not be required by a fond country till after Christmas.

He had fulfilled his pledge. He had done more, and even allowed Bob to accompany him on his visit to the lawyers.

Brown and Mason had managed Mr. Ernescliff's affairs ever since he was rich enough to need their services.

Mr. Brown, the senior partner, was used to receive strange confidences, but never in his life had he heard of a father assisting a son in such a wild-goose scheme.

"We'll find her if she's to be found, Mr. Ernescliff," he rejoined, gravely. "But I doubt a day will come when you'll not be grateful to us. Why, Boulogne abounds with (so-called) retired officers, and a good many of them never wore a uniform! I should say Mr. Robert was well out of it."

Mr. Robert fired up.

"Miss Desmond will be my wife, Mr. Brown. I'll thank you to remember that." The lawyer smiled.

"No offense, young sir, but you seem to forget one thing. Even when you have found her, the young lady may not be willing. For all you know she may have another lover, and have left Boulogne to marry him!"

Mrs. Ernescliff received her boy with all a mother's fondness, and quite agreed with her husband he had acted wisely.

"Very likely, if he comes really to know her, he will be cured without a word from us."

"You saw her?" said Mr. Ernescliff, curiously. "My dear, try and put Bob's passion out of your head, and answer me seriously. What was she like?"

"She was very beautiful, but I did not take to her, and Lucy simply detested her."

Mr. Ernescliff was very fond of Lucy, and had a good deal of faith in her opinion.

Miss Courtenay was one of those girls who so rarely speak evil of their fellows that, when they do express themselves strongly, there is generally a good reason for it.

She was very often at The Towers, and it was not difficult for the old gentleman to persuade her to take a stroll with him in the gardens.

"My dear," he said, affectionately, "don't you think Bob looks better already for the change?"

"Yes," said Lucy, falling into the trap. "He looks quite himself. I have not seen him so well since he was at Boulogne."

"I want to ask you something about Boulogne. You knew you are almost my daughter now. What did you think of Miss Desmond? You saw her and Bob together. Did it seem to you a serious attachment, or just one of his fancies?"

"I think Bob was dreadfully in love with her. I remember his eyes seemed to follow her wherever she went. And once—the only time I saw her in the room with him—when she spoke to him she turned quite white!"

"And what do you think of her, my dear? Did she seem to see the poor boy's infatuation?"

"I don't know."

"Did she blush or look conscious?"

Lucy shook her head.

"If you had once seen her you would never ask that. I don't believe she could change colour or look agitated. She has a lovely face, just the face to put in a picture, but there was not a scrap of feeling in it. I know Alan laughed at me, but the first time I ever saw her—before Bob had taken his craze about her—I shuddered all over. She seemed to me so beautiful, and yet so like a snake."

"It is not like you, Lucy, to say that."

Lucy shook her head.

"I don't mean to be unkind. I believe, sometimes, we have presentiments to warn us of certain people. Well, I had one when I saw Miss Desmond. I seemed to know that through her some cruel sorrow would fall on me or mine."

"Lucy, Alan did not admire her, and—"

Lucy laughed, the hearty merriment of perfect security.

"I don't believe Alan ever admires anyone but me, though it's dreadfully conceited to say so. He disliked Miss Desmond nearly as much as I did, and Basil hated her."

"Your brother?"

"You see, Basil and I both were very much taken with the younger sister, and we could not help seeing that the beauty was unkind to her."

"And the girls were ladies?"

"Oh, yes! There was no doubting that. If Bob marries Miss Desmond you will all be proud of his wife. She will do you honour, but—"

"But we shall not love her. Eh, Lucy?"

"I did not mean that. I don't think she would make Bob happy. He has such a large heart, and I think she has none at all."

The preparations went on for the wedding. The day was fixed, the dresses made, and the guests invited, when one day Sir Bryan, who rarely interfered in his wife's province, said, quietly,—

"Constance. I met Cyril Westwood the other day. He is staying at Bournemouth with his mother and a cousin. Could you make room for them next week?"

Lady Constance raised her eyes. She liked Cyril Westwood, who was the son of her husband's oldest friend, but she simply detested his mother.

The Honourable Mrs. Westwood had once—long years before—tried to make mischief between Lady Constance and her lover.

They had been girls together, and Sir Bryan, despite his embarrassments, had seemed a great match to the portionless Miss Harley. Moreover, he was a handsome man, whom many women would have loved for his own sake.

Belinda Harley did her best to wrest him from her friend. She failed. The loyal English gentleman did not even know of the struggle so bound up in Constance, even her hopes; but his fiancée knew it, and even at the space of thirty years had not forgiven it.

Miss Harley married soon after herself; and, oddly enough, her husband was Sir Bryan's oldest friend.

She did her best to wean Mr. Westwood from his comrade. She poisoned all the happiness of their intercourse, but she never accomplished making a breach between him and the Courtenays; and, when he died, he left his only son to Sir Bryan's guardianship.

Cyril Westwood had spent many a vacation at Courtenay Hall, was much liked by everyone there, but his mother had never crossed the threshold since her husband's death.

No wonder May Delaval had urged that Maude Desmond, being Mrs. Westwood's

niece, rendered the difficulty of Basil's path greater; no wonder, little as he was inclined to like his darling's half-sister before he turned from her, still more now he knew her relation to the woman he knew was his mother's aversion.

"They have been to Ventnor," went on Sir Bryan, not noticing his wife's gesture, "and did not care for it, so they are settled at Bournemouth for Christmas. I asked Cyril to come to us for the twentieth, but he said he could not leave his mother alone in strange apartments."

"That was like asking you to invite her."

"No, Lucy," said her mother, quickly. "Cyril would never do a thing like that. I understand he wanted us to see it was not his own wishes that kept him away."

"I thought it would be a kind little attention," said Sir Bryan. "At such a time one should wipe out old scores. And, as for room, you know Mrs. Ernescliff would lend you a dozen spare bed-rooms, and be glad."

"What is the niece like?"

"I have not seen her."

Lady Constance seemed lost in thought.

"I think Mrs. Westwood adopted her sister's child, and that she left her quite suddenly last year. Can she have been taken into favour again?"

"Apparently. Cyril spoke of her as Maude."

"Maude Desmond," returned her ladyship; "that was the name. My sister told me there was a new master now at Desmondville. That must be this girl's father. I always meant to write and ask her how she liked the daughter, but I have been so busy, I forgot."

Lucy turned to her mother with two pink spots shining on her cheeks.

"Mother, were the Desmonds very very poor till lately? and was this 'Maude' a half-sister?"

"There was a little girl, I think, by the second marriage, but I never heard particulars."

"Then I met them abroad," said Lucy. "and Bob is awfully in love with Miss Desmond. If you bring her here, mother, you will earn his undying gratitude!"

"But Mr. and Mrs. Ernescliff might be annoyed," said Lady Constance, quickly.

"I think not. Shall I ask them?"

"Really, I wish you would contrive the invitation somehow," said Sir Bryan, anxiously. "Cyril always seems like one of us; and I don't care for the idea of his being left out in the cold."

There was one person at the table who had said nothing, a pretty girl of eighteen, Dorothy by name, but never called anything but Dolly. Dolly was Sir Bryan's youngest daughter. She had been a toddling child of three in the days when the Hall first became a kind of second home to Cyril Westwood.

The big schoolboy and the tiny damsel had struck up a friendship which lasted without a single break until, at the beginning of the last year's summer, Cyril had gone to Norway, and Dolly been dispatched to a finishing school.

They had parted as child-friend and protecting elder brother; they would meet as young man and maiden.

Lucy, who loved her little sister dearly, knew that Dolly would have extra pleasure in the wedding festivities if they included her old friend and so she had put aside her own dislike to Maude Desmond, and bravely seconded her father's wishes for the invitation to be sent.

"Mrs. Ernescliff," said Lucy that very day, disturbing her mother-in-law over her afternoon nap, "prepare for the most wonderful news. We have discovered Bob's divinity!"

Mrs. Ernescliff started, and her husband, who had come in just in time to hear the news, said gaily,—

"Bravo Lucy! You are better than any lawyer. Now, who is she? Considering we have promised to make acquaintance with her, I hope you have not discovered her in the

shape of the young person who came to try on your wedding dress. Eh, my dear?"

A pang seized Lucy. She loved both Mr. and Mrs. Ernescriff dearly, but she knew they were not born to their present sphere.

They had escaped the love of money, common to self-made people, but they had an almost inordinate respect for rank.

The girl, simple and loyal as she was, always felt that her father's title had enhanced the warmth of her new relations' kindness.

It suddenly flashed upon her that the Honourable Maude Desmond, the daughter of an English baron, and the grandchild of another, would be a formidable rival to her in their affection.

"You need not fear that, Mr. Ernescriff. Do you remember my father's ward, Cyril Westwood?"

"The late Lord Harley's grandson?" put in Mrs. Ernescriff, who studied the peerage more even than her Bible. "Of course, we recollect him, Lucy. One of the finest young men I know. But what can he have to do with Miss Desmond?"

"She is his first cousin, of course," admitted Lucy. "It may be a mistake, but the name and the description fit in. Mrs. Westwood adopted her niece, who lived with her till last year, when she went to France to join her father. He came into the family title this summer, and is now living at Desmondville, quite close to my aunt, Lady Vivian. We should never have found it out, only papa met Cyril yesterday, and, finding he was staying at Bournemouth, asked him to the wedding."

"My dear," cried Mrs. Ernescriff energetically. "I'm sure I would be the last to interfere with your dear mother's plans, but if she could include Miss Desmond in the invitation John and I would be so grateful."

Lucy smiled.

"I was going to tell you Cyril excused himself, because he could not leave his mother and Miss Desmond, so father wanted us to ask them too. We were rather objecting, for the Hall will be very crowded; and then, in talking it over, we discovered that this very Miss Desmond was our Boulogne acquaintance. I told mamma Bob would be everlastingly grateful to her if she asked Miss Maude, but mamma suggested you and Mr. Ernescriff might not."

"She wronged us," said Mrs. Ernescriff, quickly. "You know, Lucy, I always admired Miss Desmond."

"I know," said Lucy, quietly. "It will be a terrible squeeze, but I will ask mother to send the invitation."

But Mr. Ernescriff had an idea.

"Why should not Mrs. Westwood and her niece come to us? The young lady met my wife abroad. It might easily be put in the note you were a little overcrowded at the Hall!"

"It would be very kind of you."

"Not a bit! We should like it. You might keep Mr. Westwood. Young men don't take much room, and Bob might find the cousin in the way."

Lucy smiled.

"I don't think Bob need fear. I know Cyril very well, and I am quite sure he is not in love with his cousin."

She did not think it needful to remind the Ernescriffs that, after all, Miss Desmond might not be the young lady they believed. Knowing their one foible, she judged rightly they would be gratified in any case by receiving two guests who had the right to put Honourables before their names.

"Mother, dear!" she said, gently, on her return, going to where Lady Constance sat at work—for the mistress of Courtenay Hall had such a slender purse that her needle had to do great things—"It is all settled, they perfectly jumped at the idea of having two Honourables, and we may keep Cyril."

"Lucy!"

Lucy blushed.

"I love them dearly, mother. I know their hearts are as true as gold, but I can't help smiling when I see the importance they attach

to a title. I think I'm glad they will have Miss Desmond to engross them, or they would try to take possession of May, and May hates being reminded she is 'my lady.'"

Lady Constance sighed. She had brought a portion to her husband, but it was a slender one compared to the vast wealth her niece must bring to whoever she married.

She was honestly fond of May, but she could not help wishing she was not quite so frank and at ease with Basil.

The union of these two was her darling scheme. Naturally, she thought the family from which she sprang equal to any in England.

She would have been content in any case for Basil to wed a Delaval; and May was so bright and so attractive, thought so little of her own wealth, that the most sensitive man might have married her without feeling a single reminder even in thought that she was an heiress.

"I hope Basil won't be attracted by Miss Desmond!"

"He simply couldn't bear her," said Lucy, quite forgetting to add the aversion had not extended to her sister. "And you know, mother, Basil never changes—he likes or dislikes at first sight."

"Apart from her want of fortune I could not like Miss Desmond for a daughter-in-law."

"Why, mamma?"

"My dear, I would rather not explain it. She is her mother's child, and I have no opinion of any of that family."

"But Cyril belongs to it!"

"Cyril is a thorough Westwood. There is nothing of his mother about him!"

"And he is well off?"

"Yes; entirely independent of his mother. Ah! Lucy, General Westwood must have suffered cruelly before he made such a will. Its every line told how he had been disappointed in his wife."

"I never heard of the will!"

"He was a very rich man, but he only left his widow five hundred a-year. She was to have no voice in her son's education or profession. When he came of age, Cyril was 'recommended' to increase his mother's income by an annual allowance; but he was prohibited from settling any money on her by deed or gift. He was left free to marry whom he pleased, but his mother was not to live in the same house with him on pain of forfeiting her whole income, and if he died without a child the whole fortune passes to your father."

"To papa?"

"Hugh Westwood knew my husband's true heart so well. The very way to make him careful and anxious over Cyril's career was to ensure the lad's death enriching him. I think your father has expended more thought and care over Cyril than any one of his own boys."

"And if Cyril died everything would come to us?" said Lucy, slowly. "It seems terrible."

"When he was a boy I used to feel frightened whenever he had a cold," confessed Lady Constance; "but at seven-and-twenty, seeing he is as strong as any young man I know, I don't think we need fear becoming his heirs."

"And that is why papa has pressed him to marry?"

"Yes; the moment he was of age your father urged him to find a wife. The estate can be charged with a handsome income for her, though he is powerless to make a will until he has a child. Surely you can remember, Lucy, how seven years ago, we used to hunt up all the eligible damsels in the place?"

"I remember, and Cyril used to leave them all to pine alone, while he dug Dolly's garden or painted her doll's house. Depend upon it, mamma, Cyril will never marry unless you have him for a son-in-law."

Lady Constance sighed.

"I have tried very hard to stop the intimacy. I only sent Dolly to school in that hope!"

"With the result that Cyril went to Nor-

way, clearly showing us Courtenay Hall was not worth a visit in Dolly's absence. I wonder if his mother knows his peculiar attachment?"

"Probably she suspects it. I believe her one object was that he should marry his cousin!"

"Mother!" said Lucy, slowly. "I wish we had never gone to Boulogne!"

"My child. You seemed to enjoy it!"

"But we met those Desmonds; and, mother—I wouldn't confess it to any other creature—I feel afraid of Maude!"

"Why, Lucy, you are foolish. I never saw a man like Alan. He is blind to every face but yours!"

"I am quite easy about that!"

"Then what troubles you?"

"I feel Maude Desmond will injure me. I can't see how. Alan laughs at me, and says she will jilt Bob, and that is what I have in my head; but, mother, it is not. I am fond of Bob; but he has had so many love affairs I don't feel much interest in them. It is Basil I fear for—or Dolly!"

Lady Constance went to the sideboard (they were sitting in the dining-room for a wonder), poured out a glass of wine, and insisted on Lucy drinking it.

"Dear," she said, gently, "you are nervous and upset. I shall wish we had refused your father's desire at once if it makes you so fanciful. Just think, Lucy, that, on your own showing, Basil is safe from Miss Desmond's spells; while, as for Dolly, even if his cousin had wished to marry Cyril, the days of venting jealous disappointments on rivals are over. If Cyril and Dolly still care for each other depend on it, Lucy, an attachment that has lasted thirteen years won't easily be disturbed."

A very gracious acceptance came from Mrs. Westwood which, though polite and courteous, yet found weak points in Lady Constance's feelings, and stabbed them to the quick.

"She should be delighted," wrote the widow, "to come to dear Lucy's wedding, and it would be charming to stay at The Towers, for the Hall had painful memories for her of the past. Her son, of course, would go there. It seemed like his own home. She and her dear niece would be happy with 'those good Ernescriffs.' Maude was a charming girl. Portionless, of course, but beautiful enough to win a husband without stooping from her own rank."

"An insult from beginning to end," was Lady Constance's reflection, as she dropped the perfumed missive into the fire. "Thank Heaven, Lucy was not here to see it."

Lady May and Basil arrived the very same day as the Westwood party, but by a later train. The Ernescriffs and their guests were to dine at the Hall, and Lucy longed for a moment's *tête-à-tête* with Basil to warn him of the meeting in store; but, alas! Basil only reached home in time to make a hurried toilet, and Lucy, instead of flying in search of him, had to take care of her cousin.

She and May were great friends, and had not met since her engagement.

"You look happy?" said May, sending away her maid, and beginning to change her dress with nimble fingers, while Lucy in her soft, dove-coloured silk, spoke her welcome.

"I do believe being in love agrees with some people."

"And not with all?"

"Decidedly not. Basil is gloom personified. He actually never spoke the last three hours in the train. Lucy, I must tell you, and then you can help me if Aunt Constantine gets too meaning in her kind speeches to me. Your brother has found his fate."

"Engaged?"

"No such luck. They call it an engagement, but the difficulties are fearful. I am a kind of mutual confidante. Lucy, I love Basil almost as well as you do; and though I have betrayed his secret to you, I shall guard it jealously from everyone else. You may pair us off together on all occasions. He can rave

about Eileen, and I don't mind listening; but, remember, you are not to let Aunt Constantine believe that."

"I understand. Then it is Eileen?"

"I forgot you knew her."

"I took a great fancy to her."

There were tears in May's eyes.

"She is the dearest little thing; but, Lucy, her sister is odious. Mark my words, there will be trouble. There is a look in Eileen's eyes, you may have seen it, which you only find in those who are marked out for suffering. She loves your brother. He worships her, and yet I don't believe they will ever be married."

"Hush!" said Lucy, gently. "You frighten me."

"I believe I am in a gloomy mood. There, I am ready. Now come downstairs."

There were several people in the drawing-room. Lucy went to speak to Mrs. Ernescliff. May stood spell-bound. There, a few yards from her, was Maude Desmond, beautiful as she had never looked before. Queenly and stately, and to May's horror, she saw her aunt advance towards her on Basil's arm.

"This is my son, Miss Desmond," she said, courteously. "As you have met before I have told him to take you into dinner."

Maude smiled graciously, and laid her gloved fingers on Basil's coat-sleeve as the procession to the dining-room began. She seemed in the sweetest temper, and to be most amiable towards her cavalier. But May Delaval shuddered as she noticed the firm light in her black eyes.

"She hates him," thought the heiress. "How he has offended her I can't tell, but in spite of her smiles I am sure she detests him. Well, for my part, I would rather have that beautiful snake-like creature for my enemy than my friend. But Heaven help poor Basil, since she is Eileen's sister!"

(To be continued.)

LOTTERIES.—Lotteries are built and thrive upon superstition. Men and women find the number on which they finally stake their fate in all manner of absurd and unmeaning ways. All the tens of thousands of ticket-holders in a great lottery have selected their number in some way satisfactory to themselves, about which we hear nothing when the result is a failure, as in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred it necessarily is. But when the result chances to be a success, as in a small proportion of cases it must be, the whole story is gravely related in the papers as though the number actually bringing the prize had been determined beforehand by some scientific process of reasoning, and success assured by the exercise of good judgment and ingenuity. Yet it is idle to inveigh against the folly of such fancies and superstitions. They have existed in all ages and among all races from time immemorial.

DOGS IN WARFARE.—The use of dogs in warfare is no new thing. As long ago as 1476, the battle of Grandson was fought and won largely by fighting dogs. The Spaniards employ them extensively in their brutal work in South America. Vasco Nunez took a regiment of dogs with him, and in one battle alone they are reported to have strangled more than two thousand Indians. Pizarro, assuredly one of the most ruthless warriors who ever led a Spanish army of the grim old type, naturally did not neglect such potent aid, and his dogs did much to win the battle of Caxamarca. So valiantly, indeed, did they comport themselves that it was ordered from Madrid that henceforward the regiment of dogs should receive regular pay on the same footing as the human soldiers. History does not say who pocketed the money. Even the "chivalrous" Henry VIII. joined a contingent of four hundred fighting dogs to the army he sent to aid Charles V. in his wars with Francis I. The nations of antiquity, of course, set the example in this as in so many other things.

SIGN LANGUAGE.

—o—

THEY stood beneath the whispering trees;
The birds were all asleep,
And slowly through the tender sky
The stars began to peep.
The yellow primroses around
Were bursting into bloom;
A question had been asked, and now
He waited for his doom.

A little breeze went by, and kissed
The half-averted cheek,
Stirring the ripples of her hair—
And still she did not speak;
But toyed with her crimson fan,
Dropping her tender eyes,
Whose lucent, melting depths outvied
The summer's bluest skies.

And yet she did not answer, but
Across her bonny face
Sweet little blushes came and went.
The bunch of creamy lace
She wore upon her bosom rose,
Fluttered and slowly fell
While all about the silence lay
Like some mysterious spell.

The tiny blossoms coyly kissed
The borders of her gown;
He took the little, trembling hands
And clasped them in his own,
And on her lips and cheeks and brow
His hot caresses fell,
For though she did not answer him,
He knew that all was well.

C. T.

A DESPERATE DEED.

—o—

CHAPTER XXII.—(continued.)

"WELL, my poor woman, you are better," said Mrs. Trendworth. "How in the world did you come to be abroad at such an hour?"

The blue glasses travelled from one to the other of the group around her. On Iva her glance rested. It was to her she spoke:

"I was coming from the train," in a low, bewildered voice.

"But the London train gets in at eleven," hazarded the colonel.

"I know, sir. I've been since then trying to reach here."

"Here?"

"No," correcting herself, "the next village." She spoke peculiarly—almost like a foreigner—omitting consonants and letting her words half slip into others.

"And what was taking you there?" demanded Granny Morris sharply. She was a much-indulged old dame and not at all hesitant about speaking out her mind, even when "gentlefolks" were present.

The timid, silvery head was uplifted.

"I was looking for work. I heard it was to be had at Rugely. But I have been ill lately, and the distance was greater than I thought, and I became exhausted and felt where I was found."

Lady Iva's eyes grew dim with compassionate tears.

The poor thing! to be old, destitute, lonely. To the girl in her youth, pride, beauty, her happy home near by, her lover at her side, such a fate seemed worse than death.

"What work can you do?" asked Granny Morris, with a doubtful look at the frail form, the small, smooth hands.

"I can make myself generally useful, I can cook and I can sew."

A silence fell.

There was something repellent to Lady Iva in the way they were all standing around the woman. The little creature seemed cowering under their scrutiny and questions.

She turned to Mrs. Morris with an air of decision.

"For the present at least, Granny, she shall stay with you. I think she had better remain here altogether. You need help. Willie is a great charge for you. Take her now and make her lie down."

The pale lips murmured their gratitude as the woman followed Granny Morris.

Hark!

They could hear a carriage stop for an instant on the road without. Then it rolled away.

Then a voice questioned Jimmie.

A moment later a man's tread came up the path into the house, into the parlour.

"Well—a catastrophe?" asked Sir Geoffrey Damyn's lazy voice.

The Dallas people, delayed on their way, had just dropped him here as they passed.

The Colonel explained.

"Now, march!" ordered Mrs. Trendworth. "We all ought to have been in bed ages ago. You won't have a ghost of a rose left, Iva. See that?"

And indeed there was the dawn peering in, chill and ghastly, at the casement.

"Ah, but see this!" cried Iva.

They all turned quickly.

Sidling shyly into the room, his yellow curls all tousled over his head, his white, nightgown tripping the rosy feet, his finger in his mouth, came a little bit of a boy.

"Hello, young man!" cried Curzon.

"Who is he?" asked the Colonel.

"A poor little waif—a protégé of the countess," Mrs. Trendworth explained.

"You will catch a big, horrid cold, Willie," declared Lady Iva, literally and figuratively going down on her knees before him.

He smiled back at the pretty lady in the fluffy, foamy ball-dress, with the shining pearls at her throat and the ivy-leaves in her ruffled hair.

Then he lifted his tiny face and looked coolly around at the others with a child's open, direct, inquiring gaze.

"Who is he so like?" asked the Colonel.

Mrs. Trendworth looked down attentively.

"Some one we know well. Oh—" she broke off abruptly.

She turned to Damyn.

"He is like you."

"You've hit it, Maria!" vowed her brother.

Iva looked around triumphantly.

"I said so to Granny when first Willie came here!" she cried.

Geoffrey gave a short laugh.

"I ought to be tremendously flattered, I know. He is an uncommonly nice little chap!"

He could notice the likeness himself.

And then Lionel murmured a word to Iva, nodded to Sir Geoffrey and the colonel, thanked Mrs. Trendworth, and was out and striding home in the dusk of the winter dawning.

And the others hurried to luxurious dressing-rooms, and warmth, and coyness, and sleep.

Willie toddled back to bed: the dip candle was extinguished; and in the little lodge was silence, but not peace.

CHAPTER XXIII.

TAKING ROOT.

"Do you know that Geoffrey is falling in love with Iva?" the Earl asked.

The countess started.

"With Iva?" she cried out. "No—oh, no!"

Her tone was protesting, almost vehement. She did not notice the penetrating look he gave her.

And so her vague fear was to be realized. What right had he to love a girl like Iva? How dare he, remembering her whose life he had ruined?

A dull, lowering December afternoon. There had been a thaw, and the roads were disagreeably slushy. The air was damp and raw.

In the western sky a yellowish fire flickered. But soon the general greyness and darkness obscured even this shabby bit of cheerfulness.

And my lady, rolling homeward with her husband in their luxurious drag, shivered a little and drew her lovely sables more closely around her.

"Yes. Is it possible you have not remarked it? Why, Harrington spoke of it to me."

She was silent. She was trying to think it over calmly.

This was what she had been dreading. His growing infatuation she had tried hard not to see. But if others were already beginning to talk about it, it was quite absurd for her to endeavour to keep her eyes closed any longer.

She became conscious her husband was regarding her with a steady, sidelong glance.

Was he thinking her silence strange?

She forced herself to speak,—

"And Iva—do you suppose she cares anything for him?"

"Hard to tell. Iva does not wear her heart on her sleeve. And Geoffrey has always been a lion among the ladies."

"Yes," she murmured, absently.

It was strange if she was not attracted by him. There was something distinguished about the fellow, and his usual air of indifference to people and opinions must indirectly flatter and fascinate the girl when she saw it vanish in her presence.

She was roused by the Earl's voice.

"I thought," speaking slowly, "that perhaps you were aware of this."

"I? how could I be?" looking straight ahead.

"Oh," carelessly, "Damyn seemed so anxious to confide in you last evening, I fancied perhaps you allowed him to do so."

In mute inquiry she turned her face toward him.

With a sort of savage irritation he noticed how thin it was, how very large the dark-fringed grey eyes.

"I was passing through the picture gallery about dusk last evening. You and Damyn were standing near the window. I heard him say, 'For Heaven's sake, let me tell you the story of my love!' And you answered, 'No!'"

"Ah!" she said, coldly.

She remembered. Those were his words—yes. But how strangely a fragment of the conversation sounded!

They had met by chance in the picture-gallery. He had started, as he found it difficult not to do when he met her unexpectedly.

"Forgive me! You looked so like your sister just now!" in apology for the word he had crushed between his teeth at sight of her.

And she, forgetting she had resolved to pretend to him ignorance of the whole affair, flashed out in sudden fury,—

"How dare you mention her?"

"Why should I not?"

In scornful silence she would have passed on. He had stretched out his hand.

"Let me tell you about it—for Heaven's sake, let me tell you the story of my love!"

She answered,—

"No!"

And that scrap the Earl had heard!

Did the Earl really suppose that what he had overheard referred to Iva?

"Why would you not hear Sir Geoffrey," he insisted.

He wanted the Countess to vindicate herself. He feared Damyn had not had reference to Iva at all. And he would not let himself think the man had alluded to a passion for his (Lord Silverdale's) wife. She had refused to listen, it was true. But why had she not confided in him, so that he might dismiss from his home to traitorous a friend? He could not very well insult his invited guest without some excuse for so doing.

He felt like a hypocrite as he endeavoured to force an explanation. But a hundred

trivial incidents, aggregating a huge and ill-defined suspicion, haunted him—had haunted him all day.

She felt annoyed at his questioning. Why had he ever asked the man to the house?

"Because I had, and have, no interest in Sir Geoffrey Damyn's amours," she replied, coldly.

To his excited mind the answer seemed like a deliberate evasion.

Neither spoke again till they reached the eastern lodge.

"Not here, please. Drive to the southern entrance. I wish to see Granny Morris."

He shifted the reins, and drove on.

"I shall not be long," she said, as he drew up the prancing bays before the little cottage. He alighted, helped her out, and stepped back again.

Whether her absence was short or long he could not have told, as he sat there brooding deeply, while the air grew colder and the darkness fell.

With light tread my lady went up the path, turned the handle, and went in. The little parlour was unlighted, but into it from the open door of the kitchen streamed a cheery radiance.

Voices!

Involuntarily she paused. Had granny a visitor?

"My yady!" cried Willie.

"No, no!" said Granny Morris. "Your lady won't come to-night. Now be a good boy, Willie, and let me put you to bed."

In the dark parlour the Countess, still unseen, looked on in amusement at the struggle.

For just as Granny got her wrinkled hands on him, the wee chap slid away, and at a safe distance reiterated his demand:

"My yady!"

"Whom does he mean?" was asked by another voice.

Who could that be? The Countess started. Ah, she remembered now! The poor creature who had been found at the gates. They had told her about it. That must be she.

She was crossing the white-boarded kitchen. Against the crimson firelight her figure looked grotesque, small, hunch-backed, and stooping.

"Why, the Countess, to be sure. Ah, you scamp!" cried granny, explanatory and reproachful in a breath. "The Countess of Silverdale. She knew his parents, and is taking care of him. He is crazy about her. And she seems to think a sight of him. I suppose the Castle is a bit lonely with never a child in it. And some women are born mothers, you know. They never seem happy unless when caring for some poor, helpless little creature. And the Countess, for all she is so haughty, they say, she seems to be one of those."

The stranger sat down near the fire. Willie played hide-and-seek around her chair, eluding Granny's grasp.

"Hardly a night since he came but she's been down here," Mrs. Morris went on, panting from her futile exertions. "And she sets right there and cuddles him in her arms, and plays with him, till, bless you! he's got so now you can't get him to bed till he's seen her. You rascal you!"

For Willie, just captured, had slipped from her hold, and was flying around the kitchen in his nightgown, barefooted and laughing.

Around he went, Granny after him. But granny had "the rheumatics," and could move but slowly. His second circle half completed, Willie dashed his sunny head into a soft mass of velvet and fur.

"My lady!" cried granny.

"My yady!" echoed Willie.

She tossed the old woman a parcel and took the little fellow up in her arms.

"And was Willie wanting me?"

"Ess."

He cuddled his head down in her perfumed furs.

Granny meanwhile opened the parcel. She shook out a dress, a lovely little confection, as

our French cousins would call it, all rich blue velvet and silver braid.

"Oh," the lodge-keeper cried, "for Willie! Isn't it too fine for him, your ladyship?"

But her ladyship only looked at her in the silence of displeasure.

"That is my affair," she said, quietly, at length. "You are paid for taking care of him, not for offering your opinion!"

Mrs. Morris courtsteed humbly.

"I beg your ladyship's pardon!"

Indifferently the Countess turned away, fixed her cold grey eyes on the quaint figure by the fire.

"Who is your guest, granny?"

The woman rose.

Silhouetted against the lamplight and firelight she looked more uncanny than ever.

"Her name is Mrs. Lester, my lady."

"Ah! Mrs. Lester. You are going to remain here, I suppose, Mrs. Lester?"

The silvery head was inclined towards Granny Morris.

"You may stay if you want to!" assented that individual, curtly.

She was suffering still from her rebuff.

But even her old eyes noticed what a contrast the two women made in the firelight.

A tremendous contrast! One young, fair, dark-haired, the transitory bloom of her drive in the chill air tinging her cheek; one erect, graceful as a willow-tree, clad all in softest velvet, in costliest furs. And the other small, dark-skinned, silver-haired, with glasses on her eyes, and a cheap stuff gown on her poor deformed little body.

"Well, I must go—the Earl is waiting. Make yourself comfortable. If you need anything, come to the Castle for it," turning carelessly to Mrs. Lester.

"Good-night, granny! good-night, Willie, darling—Why, if he isn't asleep!"

And sure enough he was, with his pretty pink face crushed against her neck.

She laid him gently in granny's outstretched arms, bent and kissed him, hurried away, leaving behind her a scent of patchouli, and in one woman's heart a bitterness passionate and profound.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"An excellent chef, Lillian!"

The Countess nodded and smiled.

"That timbale," pursued Aunt Clara's fat and comfortable voice, "was really a masterpiece! Do you know, my dear, if it was steamed?"

Her ladyship rose and laughed.

"I am sure I haven't the faintest idea, Aunt Clara. And now I am going to introduce you to a particular friend of Mrs. Trendworth's."

All unexpected and unannounced, a few hours ago, had Aunt Clara arrived, bag and baggage, at Castle Silverdale.

"Your father has gone travelling with an old friend in the south of France, and I couldn't endure the thought of spending Christmas alone in the Honour," she explained.

"Besides, Mercer has degenerated, I assure you. The patties served last week were execrable."

And the Countess had welcomed her, secure in the consciousness of an excellent cuisine, and aware that this solitary fact would render Aunt Clara's visit one of placid delight—and digestion.

They were all in the cream-and-gold drawing-room this blustering December night, just one week before Christmas.

Nora Dallas had dropped in during the afternoon, and they had insisted on her staying to dinner, Sir Geoffrey Damyn promising to take her home later.

And Mrs. Trendworth, whose guests had all gone to the theatres at Elmly, had driven over to spend an hour or two; and Lionel Curzon had come in, as he had got into the habit of doing lately, without any apparent reason, and at reprehensible hours.

But just now Mr. Carzon was not as serenely happy as he seemed to be of late.

He wandered around like a stalwart and troubled spirit—said, "Yes, it was growing warmer," when the Earl asked him if he did not think the thermometer was falling; and to Aunt Clara's inquiry as to whether he preferred turkey stuffed with chestnuts or oysters, answered politely that he did not know there was any trouble with turkey—he had missed reading the newspapers lately.

Whereat the old lady glared at him over her very round and very rosy cheeks, and at once set him down as a frivolous and disrespectful young man.

At last young Carzon veering around the room, but never failing to closely watch the door, was rewarded by seeing it open, and Iva's sweet face look in.

She was wrapped in seal-skin from head to heel; a dark-velvet toque rested on her golden hair, and her cheeks were glowing.

Nora Dallas was singing.

So she did not immediately enter—just telegraphed a nod and a smile to the others, and stood waiting for the song to be done.

It was finished. She came in, pushing before her a charming little figure—a tiny laddie, in a dress of rich blue velvet, with ruffles of real point, forming deep cuffs and collar.

The yellow hair, cut straight across the baby brow, tumbled behind in smooth curls. The black eyes were shining with excitement; the pretty lips were parted.

"Iva!"

The tone was almost angry. Impulsively my lady rose to her feet.

"Why did you bring the child here?"

"Why, mamma—why not?"

The girl looked at her stepmother in surprise.

And now the Countess became aware that the others also were regarding her.

She laughed.

"Why not indeed, dear, unless that he ought to be in bed and asleep hours ago? Late hours are bad for babies."

She crossed over to him, began smoothing the pretty hair and talking to him. She was glad of this chance to be near him, to touch him.

"I was down at the lodge with granny," explained Iva to the rest, who were commenting on the little fellow, "and she was just trying on the new dress mamma had given him. He looked so lovely I thought I must bring him up for you all to see him."

She had flung off her cloak and cap as she talked, and now stood revealed, a tall and *soignée* young figure, in her tight-fitting black-cloth walking dress, with bands of snow-white linen enrolling throat and wrists.

"He looks like—I declare he looks like Sir Geoffrey!" exclaimed Nora Dallas.

"Oh, indeed, we've remarked that before!" Mrs. Trendworth assented.

And Aunt Clara, solemnly surveying the diminutive and picturesque figure through her gold-edged glasses, capped the climax by deciding, in her deep, round voice:

"Why, you look like enough to be father and son, you two, Sir Geoffrey!"

Her hearers laughed, lightly and carelessly. But the Countess, seated on a low *à la* chair, her arms around the boy, standing on the other carved seat, looked up, without the slightest volition or consciousness of doing so, full into the pondering, half-angry eyes of Geoffrey Damyn.

He possessed some odd, magnetic force which compelled her to answer his gaze. And, as once before, the Earl intercepted his wife's queer, reluctant, half-terrified glance.

Sudden and awful as a thunderbolt, recognition of the strangeness of the scene crashed upon the Countess.

Here, in the magnificent drawing-room of the home of a proud race, were gathered father, mother, child!

And here, too, ignorant of it all in his trust, his nobility, stood the master of the mansion, regarding the man as simply his friend, the

woman his own wedded wife, the child merely an object of her gentle charity!

What a vile imposition!

Low as she had fallen in her mad scheming, in her recklessness, in the desperate carrying out of a perilous plot, she acknowledged this.

Poor Marguerite! she was born to misery. All had been well for Lillian. Every one had loved her, even Death. He had chosen her before Marguerite. But no, no! What was she thinking? She must not let her thoughts run riot so, or some day she would find herself speaking her mind out in spite of herself. She dare not, even for a second, forget that Marguerite it was who was dead—Lillian lived!

And all the time—not a long time, to be sure, for, like a flurry of snow at the pane, it had all whirled through her brain and was gone—they were chatting and laughing around her, and speaking of the Braceborough ball and the coming Christmas festivities.

How gay they were! how light-hearted—how happy! And she! Oh, the one thought weighed upon her like a nightmare.

Geoffrey Damyn and his child—her child—under this roof!

What was the matter with her head? How queer it felt! She knew her husband was watching her. She must get away from it all a moment—from the light, the noise, all, or she might cry out her secret, as she had longed with an almost irresistible longing to do of late.

She stood up.

"I am just going to get a glass of water—No, don't ring for it; don't go yourself. I would rather go. I will be back in a moment."

This in a low voice, in answer to Harold's questioning eyes.

Unperceived she slipped out, crossed the hall, and entered the library.

Here the fire had burned down, the lamps were lowered. Here it was cool and dark. Here she could recover herself.

She flung herself down on a broad, low lounge, covered with a tiger-skin and heaped with cushions.

She clasped her hands behind her head, and lay quite still. Her alighted feet were crossed; her dusty draperies trailed over the polished floor.

In the drawing-room the chatter, the laughter, ceased. Then Iva began to sing.

A week before, Mr. O'Donnell—Mrs. Trendworth's Irish friend—had begged her to learn the song to please him, and she had laughingly consented.

And the Countess, lying still and quiet in the semi-gloom, heard through the half-open doors the pathetic sweetness of the ballad which her step-daughter sang:—

"Ne'er tell me of glories serenely adorning

The close of our day, the calm eve of our night,

Give me back, give me back the wild freshness of morning,

Her smiles and her tears are worth evening's best light."

There was the usual ripple of applause, over which the Countess could hear Mr. O'Donnell's hearty voice, crying:—

"A thousand thanks, Lady Iva! And isn't it now a most delightful song, my dear?"

"The wild freshness of morning!" Ah, that went from her for ever when she was very, very young, the Countess thought. He had blasted it—Geoffrey Damyn.

But she must not think about it all—she must not. She grew so bitter and revengeful when she gave way to such thoughts; and she was actually afraid of herself at such times.

Only a few hot, sorrowful tears forced themselves under the burning lids—only she was so sorry for the girl whose morning had been plunged in one sad hour into dayless night.

"Your turn, Jimmie!"

Indistinctly she could hear the conversation in the drawing-room beyond.

Young Talbot had come in with Iva, but his entrance had been almost unnoticed because of the presence of little Willie.

He was an admirable elocutionist. Doubtless they were asking him to recite.

She could hear him protesting, "You are tired of that!" and they insisting, "No, oh, no!"

She smiled faintly. Many a time had they chaffed Jimmie over his eternal rendition of "*dux Halicuz*," and yet they would have nothing else.

He began. My lady could hear the sonorous young voice repeating the mellow lines of the fantastic, yet awful poem.

Dreamily she lay, a peace like that of the opium eater's, vague and foundationless, creeping softly over her.

Without, the moon was buffeting her way up the cloud-enumbered sky. Now she showed her pale face, and now she wrathfully hid it in some greenish-black sky drift.

The curtains were pushed back from the lofty windows. Through them, as though at a panorama, the Countess gazed.

What was that? Someone, something there at the casement?

Oh, no, no! She was so nervous; every shadow startled her!

Jimmie was almost through. As one in a trance she lay and listened to the last sad lines:

"And I think in the lives of most women and men

There's a time when all would go smooth and even,

If only the dead could find out when

To return and be forgiven!"

Such a shriek! Barely was the last line spoken, when it rang through the Castle—a wild, shrill, quivering shriek.

Instantly those in the drawing-room were on their feet, alert, dismayed.

What had happened?

"Lillian!"

It was the Earl who had spoken.

He flung wide the door, and sprang across the hall.

The others crowded after him. The scream had undoubtedly come from the library.

Jimmie Talbot grasped the lamp from the clutch of one of the mailed figures at the stairway, and carried it into the darkened room.

"Lillian—Lillian, darling!" the Earl cried.

For just before the great central window she was standing, one arm outflung, pointing ahead, a defiant, yet crouching little figure.

Iva hurried to her, and put her arms around her.

"Mamma—dear mamma—what is it?"

A queer scene. The great library lighted only by the crimson lamp in the boy's hand. The group of startled guests. The commanding figure of the Earl, to which little, frightened Willie clung. The two women in the centre of the room, one consoling, questioning, the other clinging to her, scared, sobbing.

"What was it, dear?" the Earl asked, gently.

She could only point shudderingly to the window.

"I saw it there."

"What?"

She broke into hysterical weeping.

"A ghost!" she cried. "I saw a ghost!"

(To be continued.)

LONGEVITY without regularity of habits is rare. Old people, men and women alike, are early risers and regulars, almost without exception, and fully nineteen out of every twenty have observed this custom throughout life, except, perhaps, at some short period in youth. Meals have been eaten regularly, three each day, with dinner at noon, the exception being so rare as to indicate nothing. Exercise in most cases has been hard work up to sixty-five or seventy. Old people are, as a rule, as active and fond of constant occupation as most persons are at thirty-five.

THE MYSTERY OF THE TOWER.

—10:—

CHAPTER I.

GALBRAITH CASTLE is in H-shire—a fine old, grey-stone building, which has been the home of the Earl of Galbraith since Norman William came over the seas with his victorious host of warriors, and took the lands from the conquered Saxons to bestow them on his own favourite followers.

Many years have passed since then. The suns of many summers, the winds of many winters, have beaten on the old grey walls, and turreted steep, but the Castle has bravely withstood the test of time; and now, by the addition of another wing, and various modern improvements, it can hold its own, for comfort, with any residence in the United Kingdom.

On this December day—close upon Christmas—it looks bleak and dismal enough outside, for a hard frost has set in; the sky is like blue steel, the ponds are all frozen, the ground is hard and crisp beneath the tread, and the trees in the park are silhouetted against the sky like delicate dark lacework, each tiny twig showing up with perfect distinctness.

A few misel-thrushes are hopping disconsolately about on the look-out for food, and a robin, perched on an evergreen, is trilling out a melancholy little song, that breaks melodiously on the frosty silence.

Indoors the scene is very different. A group of ladies are assembled in the morning-room drinking tea out of fragile cups of Dresden china, and looking all more or less picturesque in their bright velvet or plush gowns, adorned with delicate lace, and dainty ribbon bows.

A huge fire of scented logs burns on the hearth, and casts ruddy shadows upon the rich appointments of the room; big pots of flowers (brought in from the conservatory fresh every morning) are blossoming on tables and stands, and an immense crystal bowl, full of violets, fills the air with the sweetness of their perfume.

At a small table, in front of the silver tea equipage, sits the Countess of Galbraith—a young widow of about thirty, fair-haired, and patrician looking, and by her side is the well-known beauty, Lady Cecile Craven—a girl of nineteen or twenty summers, with the bluest of blue eyes, the sunniest of golden hair, and the most lovely, kissable mouth that it was ever man's lot to look upon!

"What a bother it is!" she was saying, sympathetically to the Countess. "What shall you do?"

"I'm sure I don't know," rejoined Lady Galbraith. "I suppose I shall have to upset all the arrangements I have made, for of course the poor girl must have *somebody* to meet her at the station."

"What is your difficulty?" asked a tall young man, sauntering up at that moment, and addressing the hostess. "I can see from your face that you are in some sort of dilemma, and perhaps—who knows?—I may be able to give you some help."

"I'm afraid not. My trouble is beyond your assistance, Bertie, otherwise I should have confided in you before. After all, it is not so very bad," she added, laughing. "The fact is, I'm expecting Blanche's new governess this evening, and I intended to send the dog-cart to meet her at the station. All the other carriages will be in use, you know, because of the ball at Holthorpe; and now Barnes has just sent in to say that the brown mare has sprained her leg, and he is afraid to drive the chestnut."

"I'll drive the chestnut," returned Captain Charlton, quietly, "and I'll meet the governess. There! Now are you satisfied?"

"But you are going to Holthorpe!" exclaimed Lady Cecile, "and the governess does not arrive until eight o'clock, just when you will be dressing!"

"Just when I *should* be dressing if I were

going to the ball," he corrected; "but, as it happens, I am not, consequently I shall be at liberty."

"Not going to the ball!" repeated the Countess, in surprise. "Why not?"

"Because Adeline is not well enough, or fancies she is not well enough, to go, and I can hardly leave her."

"What nonsense!" Cecile exclaimed, while Lady Galbraith added,—

"I really do not see the necessity. Adeline is not seriously ill, and she has her maid. Still," breaking off abruptly, "of course, you know best, and you must do as you please."

"Thank you!" he returned, bowing gravely, "In that case I will do myself the honour of escorting your governess back to the Castle, and I hope—as a reward for my benevolence—the lady will turn out to be young and pretty. It is the least return she can make me."

"The very least," acquiesced Cecile. "But"—turning laughingly to Lady Galbraith—"do you think it will be quite proper to allow Captain Charlton to chaperon the governess? We are all aware of his propensities, and who knows but what, before their return to the Castle, he may have turned the poor girl's head for ever and aye by his wicked compliments?"

"You are too bad, Lady Cecile! I have never paid you any compliments."

"Because I would not give you the chance."

"No; for the much better reason that perfection is beyond the reach of compliment."

"Listen to him!" Lady Cecile cried, still laughing, and holding up her finger in arch rebuke. "He is absolutely incorrigible. I really think, Lady Galbraith, that he ought to be prevented from going to the station."

"But I have no alternative," sighed the Countess. "The chestnut is the only horse available, and nothing would induce Barnes to drive him, so that Bertie is a *pis aller*. Besides," she added, in a different tone, and with a kindly glance at the handsome young soldier, "I think I can trust him—especially when he knows that the governess is an orphan—quite friendless, and alone in the world."

Charlton made no reply; and just then the trio were joined by a tall, dark man of nearer thirty—handsome, but grave, and more sedate than his years seemed to warrant. This was the Honourable Ronald Galbraith, the younger brother of the late Earl, and guardian of his only son, the present boy Earl.

As he came up the faintest possible flush drifted into Lady Cecile's cheek, and for a moment her long, fringed lids drooped, then she raised her blue eyes to his.

"Have you altered your mind, Mr. Galbraith, and decided on going to the ball to-night?" she asked, taking up a screen of ostrich feathers so as to shield her face from the blaze of the fire.

He hesitated for a moment before replying. "I think not, Lady Cecile. Balls, as you know, are not in my line."

The girl's scarlet lips curved into a half-amused pout.

"I suppose you mean you despise them, and think we, who go to them, mere frivolous butterflies, fit for nothing else."

"Indeed," Ronald Galbraith responded, with a slight smile, "I think nothing of the kind. On the contrary, I envy you your power of enjoyment, and wish I could emulate it."

"There is no reason why you shouldn't."

He sighed, and looked into the fire without replying. There was something strangely subdued and quiet about him that frequently made people wonder whether his life held some secret trouble, which had sapped his youth, and made him old before his time. Cecile often found herself speculating on the possibility, and perhaps this accounted for the interest she took in him.

"Will nothing tempt you?" she said presently, very softly—her voice lowered so that he only heard the words, "Suppose—someone

—very much wished you to go, what should you say?"

"It would depend on who the 'someone' was," he rejoined, promptly; and then, after a slight hesitation, he came a step nearer, and bent his head closer to hers. "Do you mean Lady Cecile, that my going or remaining away is of the smallest possible moment to—*you*?"

Again those long curly lashes swept her cheek. When she raised them, there was a spice of coquetry in her glance.

"I did not say that, Mr. Galbraith."

"No; but I fancied—I hoped—that you might have meant it."

He looked at her eagerly, and it was strange how completely his face altered under the influence of the new expression upon it. He was animated—hopeful—y younger by ten years than he had been five minutes ago.

Cecile remained silent. A coquette to her finger-tips, she would have been untrue to her training if she had let him see what she really felt; and yet the presence of Ronald Galbraith affected her too deeply to allow her to practise upon him those pretty little feminine wiles which she would have had no scruples in showing off to any other man.

"I beg your pardon," Galbraith said, drawing back, with a shadow of constraint in his tone. "I am afraid I have been led away by my vanity into imagining a very absurd thing. My presence or absence at Holthorpe to-night cannot possibly make the slightest difference to you—and I was a fool for thinking otherwise."

"Were you?" Lady Cecile said. "I'm not so sure about that"—and then, without looking to see how he received this declaration, she sprang up with the lightness of a bird, and ran across the room to the recess of the window, holding back the drapery with one hand, while she gazed down on the terrace below, where two or three of the male visitors, who had just returned from a day's shooting, were holding a final colloquy with the game-keeper regarding the next day's arrangements.

Presently the door of the morning-room was opened, and a head thrust inside.

"May we come in, Lady Galbraith?" said the head. "We are very dirty, and very unpicturesque, but we are tired, and a cup of tea would be nectar itself."

"Come in, by all means," the Countess returned, and the permission was followed by the entrance of four gentlemen in knickerbockers and shooting-jackets, the last of whom immediately made his way up to the window recess, where Cecile—a tall, graceful figure, in a wonderful tea-gown of palest green plush, and a knot of yellow roses fastened in her bosom—still stood, gazing out into the gathering darkness.

"Watching for me, Lady Cecile?" said the new-comer. "That is kind of you. Believe me, I am duly grateful."

She turned round, and faced him sharply.

"Your gratitude is thrown away, Mr. Borlase, for you were certainly not in my thoughts."

He bowed, and smiled rather mockingly. Sydney Borlase was generally considered a handsome man; but people said his smile reminded them of Mephistopheles. He certainly looked rather like the spirit of evil at the present moment, for he was a gentleman unaccustomed to "snubs" such as Cecile had just administered.

"Then I envy the person who was. It is a distinction I covet."

She shrugged her graceful shoulders, and turned away; and Lady Galbraith, who was crossing the room at the time, and observed the gesture, shook her head reprovingly.

"Why do you always treat Mr. Borlase so cavalierly? Has he been doing anything to offend you?" she asked, with the freedom of an old friend.

"He is always offending me," Cecile returned, petulantly. "His very presence offends, even while it fascinates me."

"My dear child! What do you mean?"

"I hardly know," answered the young girl, with a half-shamed laugh, "but Mr. Borlase always affects me very curiously. I like him and dislike him at the same moment, and if I believed in mesmerism, or psychic force, or anything of that sort, I should fancy he possessed some supernatural influence over me. Do you know?"—she dropped her voice into a whisper—"I have an idea that his fate and mine are destined to cross each other? I don't know how, and I can give you no reason for the fancy—which I daresay you will think a very foolish one; but there it is, all the same, and I can't get rid of it, however much I try."

Lady Galbraith looked at her wonderingly. This was the first time she had heard the spoilt young beauty speak in such a curious strain; and the conclusion she came to was that Cecile must have been reading novels of the mystic class, and they had, for the time being, turned her little brain.

Lady Galbraith herself did not read novels on principle. She was a society woman, and found quite enough to occupy her time in going out and receiving visitors—in trying on dresses, and settling with milliners as to the colours and shapes of her new bonnets. But she was a kindly woman, sweet-natured, and generous for all her frivolity, and a devoted mother to her two children, Blanche and Rupert.

The Castle was about four miles from the nearest station, and as Captain Charlton drove there at about seven o'clock that same evening, he had reason to feel grateful that the moon was up, for the road was especially lonely, and there was a good deal of up-and-down hill that might have proved dangerous to a less skilful driver.

The chestnut was determined to uphold her reputation for skittishness. First of all she absolutely refused to start, backed into the plantation, and behaved in a generally indecorous manner, ending up by bolting off at a mad gallop, as if quite determined to smash the cart and its occupants in one grand *mêlée*. But she had counted without her host.

Bertie Charlton had been the crack whip of his regiment, and his muscles were braced to the firmness of iron.

He let the mare have her head until they came to the bottom of a hill—simply contenting himself with guiding her—then he gave her a liberal taste of the whip, and forced her to keep up her pace until they were half-way up the incline.

"There, my lady," he said, with a grim smile, as, blown and panting, she settled down into a steady trot, "I think I've conquered you."

And he had—for her behaviour during the rest of the journey was most exemplary, and taxed Charlton's powers so little that he was able to glance across the leafless hedges, on the surrounding country, which looked very bleak and cold beneath the still-white radiance of the moon.

"We shall soon have Christmas here, sir," observed the groom, as they passed a man and a drove of turkeys—the latter driven down from Wales, to be sold on the way—and Charlton acquiesced with a nod, while, strangely enough, his thoughts slipped back to a certain Christmas Day, three years ago, when he had been on a visit to a married sister in a country rectory, and had been laid up with a sprained ankle, which had kept him a prisoner to the house.

But it was not of his sister he was thinking, or the sprained ankle. A sweet girl's face, young, *riante*, and blooming, came back to his mental vision, bringing with it remembrances that he thought had died a natural death two years ago.

And yet they had power to call a tender smile to his lips, and to soften his eyes into an expression that was half pathetic.

"Poor little Aline—poor child—for she was but a child!" he said to himself. "I wonder where she is, and if she has forgotten? But

of course she has. She was so young—she did not even know what love meant, but she had a nature as sweet as her face. I wonder what makes me think of her to-night! I have not thought of her for years—not since—"

He did not conclude the sentence even mentally, but the softness all faded from his eyes, and his lips set themselves in a stern line.

Evidently the end of the retrospection was far from pleasant, and it was rather a relief to find himself at the station, where half-a-dozen vehicles—farmers' carts, drays, and other similar conveyances—were awaiting the arrival of the train.

An unusual bustle pervaded the little platform.

The porters had woken up under the stress of the Christmas parcels that were already beginning to arrive; the station-master walked about with a great sense of his own importance at this festive season—even the lamps, with their flickering oil wicks, seemed a little less dull than usual.

"Good heavens!" muttered Charlton, suddenly coming to a full stop. "What a fool I am! I actually never inquired the girl's name, so goodness only knows how I shall spot her."

He had not to wait long before the train came in, snorting and puffing like some huge black monster, and sending forth a vaporous rush of cloudy steam, as with many groans it drew up in front of the platform.

As it happened, it bore a goodly load of passengers, for it was market-day at the county town; and this fact, added to the near approach of Christmas, accounted for the unwonted number of people who alighted.

Charlton watched them all, his quick eyes glancing over them, without, however, finding the person of which they were in search.

He had fully made up his mind what the new governess would be like. Tall, slim—not to say angular—and limp, with weak blue eyes, sandy hair, and, probably, freckles.

How he got the idea he could hardly have told, except that the last governess little Lady Blanche had answered to this description; but there it was, and it was quite clear that no such person was in the train.

He waited until the engine shrieked, and puffed away on its onward journey, and by this time all the passengers were thronging towards the gate, where stood the porter collecting the tickets.

Charlton was about following them, when, under the shadow of a tree at the further end of the station, he became aware of a small, slight figure, much muffled up in furs, and this, he decided, must be the governess.

He accordingly went up to her, and as he came nearer took off his hat, which until now had been pressed low down over his brows; and as he did so the moonlight fell full upon him, showing the keen, clear-cut features, the honest, if rather reckless, grey eyes, and the close-cropped chestnut curls, swept away in crisp waves from the square brow.

A little startled exclamation broke the stillness, the small far muffled figure came swiftly forward. Two gloved hands were held out, and a sweet piquant face, with lovely star-like eyes, gazed up into his.

"Oh, Bertie—Bertie! You have not forgotten your promise? You said you would see me to-day, though you had to cross oceans to come to me, and you have kept your word!"

Literally sobbing with excitement, she laid her head on his breast; and thus, for the space of a few seconds they stood silent—she trembling from head to foot with the delight of a great and unexpected joy, and he absolutely petrified with astonishment and remorse.

"Aline!" he murmured, more to himself than to her. "Yes, it is Aline."

CHAPTER II.

HE it was who recovered himself first. Man of this world enough to know what remarks would be likely to follow if they were observed, he drew her still farther into the shadow of

the trees, gently loosening her clasp from his arms.

Then he looked at her earnestly, and saw that the years that had passed since they met had added a new charm to her beauty, a new radiance to the lovely eyes, a more rounded perfection to the curves of her delicate, spirited features.

"What brings you here?" he asked, in puzzled wonderment. "Are you alone?"

"Yes," she replied, half laughing and half crying. "I crossed the Channel last night, and came down from London by myself. I am going to Galbraith Castle as governess to Lady Galbraith's little daughter."

"Nonsense!"

"It is true; why should it not be?" opening her eyes in child-like questioning.

"Why, I am staying at Galbraith Castle myself, and I came here this evening to take the new governess back with me. The coincidence is too ridiculous."

A strange change came over her face. All the happy light died from her eyes, and she drew back as if a sudden shadow had fallen between them.

"You came here to meet the new governess!" she repeated, slowly. "Then, it was not for the sake of seeing me, and keeping your promise?"

Charlton bit his lip before he replied.

"How was it possible I could know you would be here? As for the promise—" He paused, for he could hardly tell her the truth, namely, that it had gone clean out of his mind.

"And you did not remember that this was my birthday—that I am nineteen to-day?" The scarlet lips were quivering now, and tears were perilously near the lovely eyes.

Charlton turned away, and mentally anathematised himself as a brute. That month in the country rectory, when she had been his nurse, had talked to him, played to him, read to him, had been so much to her, so little to him!

Verily,—

"Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,
'Tis woman's whole existence!"

"You see," he said, in excuse, "so many things have happened since then. I have knocked about the world, and seen so much—and done so little!—that you can hardly expect my memory to be as good as yours. But I have never forgotten you—of that you may be quite sure."

She smiled at him through her tears, and Charlton felt most devoutly grateful to the station-master, who, after eyeing them with some suspicion and more curiosity, now came up and demanded the young lady's ticket.

Aline gave it, and then followed Charlton in silence to the dog-cart, into which he assisted her, while the groom went to look after the luggage. It was not until Bertie himself had got up, and taking the reins, sent the mare off at a trot, that they had time to speak to each other again; and then he, anxious to break a silence that threatened to become awkward, said,—

"Isn't it lucky for us that the groom behind is deaf? We can say what we like without fear of its being repeated. I want to hear all about you—what you have been doing, and everything else. When I saw you last you were on the point of being sent to a French convent, you know?"

"Yes," she said, slowly, "I have been there three years—in fact I only left yesterday. Have you heard that my aunt is dead?"

"No. My sister—who was the only person likely to give me news of you—went to India with her husband, two years since."

"Yes; I knew she was gone. Well, poor Aunt Euphemia died six months ago, and, as you are aware, both my parents are dead—in fact, I have no relatives that I know of, and for money I have just forty pounds a year, so the Mother Superior of the convent advised me to get a situation as governess, and through her influence Lady Galbraith engaged me."

"There! I have told you my history. Now tell me yours."

He observed that though she spoke with the familiarity of friendship, her tone was not quite the same as it had been when she saw him first. A shadow of constraint had fallen upon it, and upon her manner as well—a fear that she had betrayed her own feelings, without gaining the response she expected; but even yet the old dream was not quite dispelled—the dream which for three long years, sleeping and waking, had been ever present. How often she had recalled the tender words he had spoken during that visit of hers to his sister—the loving looks he had given her, and the implied assurances that he cared for her!

It is true he had never, in so many words, expressed his love, but he had told her to look forward to the time when she left the convent, and had promised that nothing should prevent his greeting her when her nineteenth birthday came round. Then, he said, he should tell her his secret—and what the secret was her heart had often whispered to her.

"Oh," he said, restlessly, in answer to her question, "I suppose much the same has happened to me as happens to other men. I have found out the truth of the saying that you cannot eat your cake and have it. I have got into debt, and done those things that I ought not to have done, and left undone those things that I ought to have done; in point of fact, my career has been conventional in the extreme, and I cannot claim for it even an iota of originality."

Aline laughed softly.

"Is that all?" she asked.

He hesitated again, pulled nervously at his moustache, and gave one hurried glance at the darkly radiant face, looking out of its furrowed, by his side.

"Not quite," he answered, in a low voice. "There is something else I ought to tell you."

"And that is—"

"That I am married."

For a few minutes Aline sat very silent—but those minutes were fraught with sufficient agony for a lifetime. If she could have trusted her voice she would have murmured some words of congratulation in order that he might not suspect the true reason of her silence; but, alas! words would not come, and she could only control herself sufficiently to remain staring straight before her at the frosty, moonlit landscape, which seemed to her as cold and desolate as her own life.

"Have you nothing to say to me, Aline?"

Bertie asked at last, finding the silence unendurable.

She moistened her parched lips with her tongue before she answered, and her voice had a curiously far-away sort of sound.

"Yes. I hope—I hope, with all my heart, you are happy."

"Happy!" he repeated, with a half-groan. Then he laughed harshly. "Oh, yes; I am happy enough—as happy as nine men out of ten, I dare say, and that is something, is it not?"

"And your wife?" went on Aline, who, now that the first step had been taken, found it easier to continue. "Is she at the Castle, too?"

"Yes. She is a sort of cousin of Lady Galbraith's. She was a Miss Borlase—an heiress. I don't suppose you have ever heard her name."

"No," with a melancholy little smile. "English news very rarely came to the convent, and I was secluded as rigorously as if I had actually been a nun. Is she beautiful—your wife?"

"She was supposed to be good-looking," he answered, indifferently; "but she is not very strong—or, rather, she has an idea she is not. If she had been well enough we should both have gone to a ball to-night with Lady Galbraith and the rest, and then I should not have met you."

"Is there a large party staying at the Castle, then?" asked Aline, hastily, as if with

a desire of turning the conversation from herself.

"About ten people, I think, or thereabouts."

"Who are they?"

"Well, first of all ourselves, and my wife's cousin, Sydney Borlase; then Lady Cecil Craven, the belle of last season; a certain Mr. Proctor, a barrister; a Mr. and Mrs. Delamere, who are Americans, and a couple of 'odd men.' What do you think of the list?"

"It sounds alarming, but," with the same half pathetic smile, "I don't suppose it will affect me much, as I am not likely to see any of these grand folks."

"You will see me sometimes, I hope," he said; but Aline did not answer, for she had quite made up her mind that she would see just as little of him as possible.

This resolution, however, she kept to herself, and the rest of the journey was performed in silence that remained unbroken until a turn in the road showed them the Castle—a stately old pile, silvered over with the moonlight. Then Aline gave vent to a little cry of admiration.

"How lovely! I had no idea it was such a splendid old place!"

"It is rather pretty, certainly."

"It is something more than that—it is one of those stately homes which no country but England can show!" she exclaimed, with enthusiasm; as he helped her to alight; and soon afterwards she wished him "good-night," for Lady Galbraith's maid met her at the door, and escorted her through long, dreary passages to an octagon-shaped room in the tower. Here a deft meal was spread out, and presently a second servant appeared with tea and coffee.

"My lady told me to say she hoped you would make yourself at home, Miss Somers, and ask for anything you want," said the lady's maid. "She will see you herself early to-morrow morning."

And then she took her departure, leaving Aline to her solitary meal. Eagerly enough she poured herself out a cup of coffee and drank it, but the sight of food was distasteful to her, and she turned her back on the table, and sat looking absently into the fire, her slim, white hands clasped over her knees, her eyes heavy with unshed tears.

It seemed to her that the events of a lifetime had been compressed in these last few hours—the short time that had intervened since she left the convent, and even yet she could hardly realise what had actually happened.

After a while, however, her perceptions grew clearer, and she told herself with a sort of pathetic bitterness that she, not Charlton, was to blame for the mistake that had exercised so great an influence on her life, for she had put an interpretation on his friendship of which he had never dreamed. She had fancied he loved, while he only liked her.

Poor Aline! The warm blood surged up in a crimson wave of shame to her cheeks, and then pride and duty came to her aid. She would conquer this love of hers—stamp it out as completely as if it had never been. She would never forget that Bertie was married, and that even to think of him would be as wrong to his wife; and surely, with Heaven's aid, she would be strong enough to tear from her heart the last remnant of passion, and by-and-by hold out her hand to him with a sister's calm affection!

She knelt down for a few minutes, seeking comfort in prayer; then, with a new sense of strength, arose and went into her bedroom, which joined the sitting-room, and was similarly hung with tapestry, and equally oddly shaped.

A fire had been lighted on the hearth, but it had burnt down to a few embers; and the room—owing, no doubt, to the stone walls—struck strangely chill as Aline entered.

By this time it was nearly eleven o'clock, and silence had fallen on the Castle—for, of course, Lady Galbraith and her guests had

not yet returned from Holthorpe, and only one or two servants were sitting up for them.

It did not take Aline long to undress and get into bed; and, in spite of the conflicting emotions at war within her, she soon yielded to actual physical fatigue, and fell asleep—a restless, disturbed slumber, full of dreams and feverish fancies.

She awoke suddenly, with a breathless sense of some terrible fear—supernatural fear—upon her. Great beads of perspiration stood on her brow, and her horror was all the greater because it was nameless.

In some unaccountable way, she was conscious of another presence in the room, although, just at first, she could see nothing save the heavy oak furniture, just visible in the misty moonlight, and the moth-eaten tapestry on the walls, where warriors on white horses were battling with each other in sanguinary conflict.

An intense silence reigned, and there flashed across Aline the remembrance that she was far away from the rest of the house.

The lady's maid had told her so, and added that Lady Galbraith's reason for putting her in the Tower was the fact of all the other rooms being occupied by guests.

After Christmas, it was the Countess's intention to give her different apartments; and, as she had said this, a curious smile had come over the servant's face, as though she could have told the governess a good deal more if she had chosen to do so.

All this Aline remembered as she sat up in bed, peering through the ghostly moonlight, which lay white and chill in a long line of misty radiance that slanted through the narrow window across the room.

Surely something moved beyond that white glory—something dark and shapeless—that gradually detached itself from the shadows and took the resemblance of a woman's form!

Yes. Glad in long, neutral tinted robes, that were hardly distinguishable from the surrounding atmosphere, and with some sort of veil thrown over her hair, and half concealing her face. She stood motionless, then, with a slow movement, that can be described by no other word than gliding, she came forward, and stood in the full sheen of the moonlight, slowly lifting up one hand, until it pointed full at Aline.

Aline was no coward, but there was something so unearthly, so utterly weird in this nocturnal visitant, that all her previous theories concerning the impossibility of apparitions at once deserted her, and she felt no shadow of doubt that she was in the presence of a creature from another world.

She dared not speak—she dared not move—she could only sit upright in bed, staring with distended eyeballs at that shadowy figure in the moonlight, while an unuttered appeal went up from the depths of her heart.

How long this lasted she could not tell. To her it seemed hours, but, in effect, it could only have been a few minutes; then the tension grew too strong, and her overwrought nerves gave way.

With a shriek of terror, that echoed through the vast old passages of the Castle, she sank back on her pillow, closing her eyes in a very abandonment of fear, that was as unreasoning as it was powerful; and then, strangely enough, the sound of her own voice gave her courage, and with desperate endeavour she reached out her hand to the matches that stood on a table by the bedside, and struck one, by which she lighted a candle. Then she looked round.

The room was empty!

CHAPTER III.

BREAKFAST at Galbraith Castle was a very movable feast indeed. The Countess made no pretence of appearing until twelve o'clock; but such of the guests as felt inclined came down before that time, and had their meal served them by the butler, a gray-headed

functionary who, by virtue of fifty years' service, had grown to regard himself as one of the family, and greatly impressed the more youthful visitors by his condescending dignity and affable manners.

On the morning after the ball it was not to be expected that the ladies would be down early; and, as a matter of fact, Mrs. Charlton was the only one to appear.

She was a dark, sallow complexioned woman, with well-cut features—marred, however, by an expression of hauteur and ill-temper that had become habitual to them.

She was some years older than her husband, with whom she was passionately in love, and of whom she was equally jealous, the consequence being that poor Bertie was constantly suspected and accused of misdeemeanors of which he was entirely innocent.

To do him justice he had, since his marriage, settled down, and done his best to make a good husband.

It is true he was not in love with his wife, but she had known that perfectly well when she married him; and it is probable that, if she had gone the right way to work, she might have won from him a very sincere, if not passionate, affection. But this she did not do. Instead, she watched his every movement, suspected his most innocent action, and contrived by these means to make his life a burden to him.

It was only when she fancied herself ill—for she was a confirmed hypochondriac—and shut herself up in her room, that he had an hour's liberty; and then, as he once comically observed, he was on parole.

Altogether Bertie was of opinion that marriage with an heiress was not an unmitigated blessing; but it had been his only alternative, when ruin stared him in the face, and debts of honour crowded upon him, which, if left unpaid, would have stamped him with indelible disgrace.

Miss Borlase had let it be plainly seen that she cared for him; and when she heard of his difficulties she sent to request his presence at an interview, which was restricted to their two selves.

What passed at that interview no one ever knew, but Charlton came out of the room an engaged man, and a month later he and Adeline Borlase were married.

On this particular morning she was more peevish and fretful than usual—perhaps because her husband was particularly silent and self-absorbed.

"I wish you would give me some of that game-pie, Bertie," she remarked, in an aggrieved voice. "Really, you are very rude, never paying the slightest attention to my wants, and not caring whether I have any breakfast or not!"

"I beg your pardon!" he returned, absently, as he got up and carved the game-pie, watched as intently by his wife as by her cousin, Sydney Borlase.

"Bertie is distrait this morning," observed the latter, lightly. "His interview with the new governess last night evidently made a deep impression on him."

Charlton grew very red beneath his tan, and Borlase saw that the random shot had told. He parried his advantage.

"Was she very pretty, Bertie? and very sweet? and very confiding? You were in luck's way, old fellow!"

"What are you talking about?" Mrs. Charlton demanded, impatiently. "I have heard nothing about this governess! Pray what has she to do with Bertie?"

"Only that he asked to be permitted to drive her from the station last night. Perhaps he thought the matter too trivial to be mentioned."

Mrs. Charlton turned angrily to her husband.

"How is it you did not tell me where you had been?"

"Oh, I don't know!" he answered, with an affectionate carelessness. "I did not think it would interest you. I suppose— Besides,

when I came upstairs last night you were in your room, and your maid said you were asleep, so I did not disturb you."

"Considerate husband!" laughed Sydney, while Mrs. Charlton set her brows together in an ominous frown.

Something in Bertie's face warned her not to pursue the subject any farther just now, but she was none the less determined to sift the matter to the bottom as soon as they were left alone together, and there was no chance of an interruption.

Charlton made all haste to change the conversation, and turned to Ronald Galbraith, who was sitting at the bottom of the table.

"How did you enjoy the ball last night, Galbraith? I was awfully surprised at your going."

"Were you?" responded the young man, blushing, and looking slightly embarrassed. "So were the others, I think. It's ten years since I was at a dance—or thereabouts."

"I suppose Lady Cecile was the magnet that drew you?" jocosely observed Mr. Delamere, who was in the habit of making awkward remarks, and Galbraith vouchsafed no reply.

Borlase, however, shot a keen glance at him from beneath his dark lashes, and it was noticeable that he was silent during the rest of the meal.

When it was over he strolled into the smoking-room, where he was shortly afterwards joined by Mr. Proctor—the grey-haired, keen-eyed old barrister, whose name Charlton had mentioned to Aline the preceding night.

"Ah!" exclaimed Borlase, "you are just the person I wished to see! I am in want of legal advice, and I may as well obtain it in a friendly manner, which means without paying—as in a professional manner—which means a fee."

"Fire away, my dear boy," answered the barrister, placidly lighting a cigar. "I am at your service."

"Well, then, enlighten my ignorance on the law of property. I am writing a novel, and the plot turns on a will made by the wife. What I want to know is, suppose a wife, possessed of property, died without making a will, would her money go to her husband?"

"Her money would, but her estates—if she had any—would not; that is to say, supposing she had no children."

"To whom would they go, then?"

"Her heir-at-law, brother or cousin, or other relation, as the case might be."

"Thanks," Borlase returned, thoughtfully; and then, as if, having obtained this information from the lawyer, he had no further desire for his society, he retired to the window recess, where he sat in a deep reverie, that ended in his drawing two or three letters from his pocket, and reading them attentively.

"It's no good," he muttered at last, with a curse. "Those Jews won't wait any longer, and what is to become of me Heaven only knows! I wonder if Adeline would lend me five hundred? She might, easily enough, if she were not such a screw, but I'm afraid to ask her. However, there's no alternative, I suppose."

He got up, and stood for a moment in the deep shadow of the rich velvet curtains, looking out on the terrace, which was powdered over with a thin coating of snow. Suddenly his expression changed, growing even darker than it had been before.

Across the terrace came two people—Lady Cecile Craven, in a stylish green velvet walking-dress, trimmed with fur, and by her side, carrying two pairs of skates swinging on his arm, was Ronald Galbraith.

She was talking and laughing brightly up into his face, and even at this distance Borlase could see the smile that lighted the young man's dark features as he gazed down into her eyes.

The watcher gnashed his teeth. As much as he could care for any woman, he cared for Cecile Craven; and it was gall and wormwood

to him to see her preferring the company of another man.

He turned round from the window with a muttered oath. His prospects at the present moment certainly seemed dark enough—creditors dunning him for money on the one side, and the girl whom he fancied he loved, openly encouraging someone else, on the other.

As he left the smoking-room he encountered Lady Galbraith, who had breakfasted in her own room, and now made her first appearance in public.

"I am going to see my new governess!" she observed, after greeting him. "I have not made her acquaintance as yet."

"May not I come too?" asked Borlase, struck by a sudden remembrance.

The Countess looked surprised, but gave the required permission; and the two then went towards the schoolroom, where Aline and her pupils—twins of eight years of age—were already making friends with each other.

The bright, frosty sunlight came full in through the curious oriel-window, and fell in a sort of halo round the young girl's figure, and both the Countess and her companion were struck by her beauty. Seen in this clear morning light, she looked even younger than her years; and there was something indescribably winning in the sweet, delicate flower-tinted face, with its sensitive mouth, and deep-fringed, dark eyes. Her hair, which was of a dark chestnut colour, full of beautiful lights and shadows, was swept back from her forehead (where it broke into a hundred tiny rippling curls), and coiled in heavy masses at the top of her small head, which seemed actually weighed down by its abundance.

She rose as Lady Galbraith entered, and made a little half-courtesy, but the Countess—won at once by the radiant, childish loveliness—held out her hand.

"How do you do, my dear? I see you have already been introduced to your pupils. I hope you won't find them too trying?"

"I don't think so, my lady," Aline looked at the two little faces with smiling confidence. "I fancy we shall be able to get on well together."

"That is right. You have lost no time in making friends I see—for both children were clinging round the young girl's skirts. By the way, I trust you are rested from your journey?"

"Oh, yes, thank you, my lady."

"And you had a good night's sleep?"

Aline's face grew pale, and she moved uneasily, as if the very simple question disturbed her.

"No—I had bad dreams," she answered, in a low voice. "I was very tired when I went to bed—perhaps that was the reason."

"You had rather a long drive from the station," put in Borlase, speaking for the first time. "As your driver is a sort of connection of mine, I may be permitted to hope that he did not frighten you by indulging in any of the freaks which he sometimes practices in order to show off his skill as a whip?"

Lady Galbraith frowned slightly at a speech whose bad taste was obvious, and Aline looked into the young man's face with a certain grave directness that he found rather embarrassing.

"I do not think it is in Captain Charlton's nature to do such a thing as that," she answered quietly. "He is much too considerate of other people."

He had not been very considerate of her, poor child! But this she did not think of in her eagerness to defend him.

"It has not taken you long to form an estimate of his character," observed Borlase, with a sneer, which he could not repress. "Your opportunities for studying him must have been limited to a couple of hours at most!"

Aline coloured a little, and hesitated. Finally her natural truthfulness triumphed over her disinclination to speak of Bertie.

"Last night was not the first time I have met Captain Charlton," she said, addressing



"YOUR GRATITUDE," SAID LADY CECIL, "IS THROWN AWAY, MR. BORLASE, FOR YOU WERE CERTAINLY NOT IN MY THOUGHTS!"

herself to Lady Galbraith, and ignoring Borlase with a completeness that that gentleman deeply resented. "I was visiting at his sister's house when he was there—a long time ago."

"Indeed!" observed the Countess, kindly. "Then I am very glad he happened to meet you. It made you feel less strange coming to a new place. And now we will leave you to your pupils, and you must remember that I don't wish them to commence lessons until after Christmas."

When they quitted the schoolroom the Countess went her way, and Borlase proceeded to his cousin's apartments, where he found Charlton and his wife in the midst of a discussion that was evidently of a stormy nature.

Bertie was standing with his hand on the back of a chair, and it was clear from his face that he was exercising great self-control in preventing himself from making very bitter answers to her reproaches.

Borlase pretended not to notice the cloudiness of the horizon, but seating himself near Adeline, turned to the officer with a knowing smile.

"I've just been to see the governess, Bertie. I admire your taste. She is certainly very pretty indeed. Sly dog! You did not tell me yesterday that she was an old friend of yours!"

Charlton frowned, and made no reply. It did not seem worth while declaring that when he stated he was quite unaware of Miss Somers' identity, especially as Sydney Borlase was the last man in the world with whom he would have chosen to discuss her. Mrs. Charlton, however, had no idea of letting her husband off so easily.

"An old friend of yours, Bertie! Who is she? What is she?" Then, with vindictive spite, as he paused before answering, "Perhaps I am wrong to ask. The history of your acquaintance very probably won't bear repetition."

"That is a speech that you have no business to make, Adeline," said Charlton, sternly. "Miss Somers' good name is as free from reproach as your own, and ought to have equal consideration. She is a friend of my sister's, if you wish to know."

"But a friend whom you have never mentioned to me."

"I do not know that you have ever encouraged me to make confidences to you. Perhaps, if you had, our married life might have been different," retorted Bertie, stung into retaliation by the bitterness of her tone.

Mrs. Charlton burst into a passion of tears. She was one of those inconsequent women, of whom one can never prophecy what their next move will be.

"You see how he treats me!" she cried, appealing to Borlase, who was sitting silent, with his eyes fixed on the ground. "He knows I have no brother or father to take my part, and so he thinks he can abuse me how he likes."

"Abuse you!" repeated Charlton, in amazement.

"Yes; abuse me. Do you think I am fool enough not to see through your insinuations? Do you think that every day does not make clearer to me the fact that you married me for my money, and that is all you care for?"

"For Heaven's sake, be silent!" cried Bertie. "If you want to wash dirty linen the least you can do is to wash it in private."

"I wish Sydney to know of your conduct. He is my cousin, and nearest relative, and it is only right he should hear how things really are."

"Then you shall not tell him in my presence," declared Charlton, as he snatched up his hat and left the room, heedless of his wife's reproaches.

After the door had closed behind him, Sydney drew nearer to Adeline, and took her hand in both of his.

"Poor little cousin!" he said, softly. "How

I wish I could make you happier than you are."

Thus encouraged, Mrs. Charlton poured a long list of her husband's delinquencies into Sydney's very willing ears; and although her grievances were nearly all of her own manufacture, it is needless to say that they received deep sympathy from him, as his object now was to ingratiate himself with her.

"One good thing is that your money is entirely under your own control," he observed, as she paused; and then, after a few minutes, he tentatively preferred his request for the loan of five hundred pounds. Just for a few months, he said, until he could settle his affairs; but Mrs. Charlton was proof against any such persuasions, and at once refused to advance the money. Indeed, she professed some indignation at Sydney's presumption in asking her; and he went away, cursing her miserliness and his own folly for supposing he would gain anything from thus humiliating himself.

(To be continued.)

A PRETTY HOLIDAY GIFT.—What is called a "wonder ball" is a charming present for an older sister or for a mother. It is a favourite birthday gift in German families, and is made by winding a skein of yarn or worsted into a ball and hiding little presents here and there. Select yarn that you know will be useful; take the prettiest present for the foundation, and wind enough yarn over it to cover it; then put in another, cover that, and so on until all the presents are hidden. Of course, they cannot be found until the yarn is knit off, hence these balls are sometimes said to be for lazy people. Certainly the stocking or mitten grows much faster when every little while a pretty gift drops out. Such a ball usually affords amusement for the whole family, especially if the gifts are from different individuals, and no one has seen any except her own.



[A DARK THREAT OF VENGEANCE.]

NOVELLETTE.]

MR. CLEMENTSON'S TREACHERY.

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CHAPTER I.

LOVE OR MONEY.

RHODA CHRISTIE was sitting upon a low stool, with her head resting upon her mother's knee, tenderly caressing her hand, when the door opened, and a young, untidy girl entered the room. She was the little maid-of-all-work in the lodging house where Mrs. Christie and her daughter had apartments, and she and Rhoda were the only people in the world who ever took the trouble to speak a kind word to the over-taxed child; and her face always lighted up with a happy smile when she went into their presence.

"Well Susan," said Mrs. Christie, "who is the letter for?"

"For Miss Rhoda," answered the girl brightly and having handed it to her, she left the room without another word.

"Is your letter from Mr. Clementson, dear?" asked Mrs. Christie, a little nervously.

"No, mother mine," returned Rhoda, with a happy laugh. "It is from Douglas FitzGerald. What could Mr. Clementson have to write to me about?"

"A very great deal, dear!" answered Mrs. Christie, with interest; "because he called here to-day, and had a long talk with me, and said he would either write to you or come and see you to-night; and, Rhoda, for my sake I hope you will accept his kind and generous offer."

"What do you mean?" asked Rhoda, in astonishment. "Has he found some work for me to do at last? If so, I should not hesitate to accept it, provided it was near enough for me to return to you every evening. Tell

me what he said, mother?" and once more she smoothed the thin hand lovingly.

"He did not say he had found any employment for you, dear child," returned the widow; "but he is anxious to make you his wife! darling. And he has told me if you will only marry him he will settle a thousand a-year on you, and that his home shall be mine too. Is it not good of him?"

"Good of him!" echoed the girl, with an ashen face. "No mother, it is *not*, for he must know that I do not love him, and that nothing in the world would induce me to accept him."

"Remember how poor we are!" said Mrs. Christie, pathetically; "and how comfortable we should be at Fairlight Hall."

"I do remember we are poor, mother, dear," returned Rhoda softly, "and I must find some means of making you happier; but I should not be increasing your comfort by marrying a man I dislike, for you would be sad, indeed, if you saw me miserable, and I *should* be so as his wife, for he is a man I shrink from, feeling sure he is thoroughly bad at heart."

"Nonsense, Rhoda," said Mrs. Christie, impatiently. "You must not take such unwarrantable dislikes to people, I admire Mr. Clementson very much, and I am vexed that you should refuse so good an offer. I should have thought you had seen enough of poverty since your father died to make you thankful to accept so beautiful a home; but, of course, you must please yourself, and I will not be selfish enough to press you to marry for my sake, although I must confess I should have been glad to have seen us both so comfortably settled for life."

"Mother, dear," answered Rhoda gently. "You loved my poor father. Tell me would you have married anyone else, even for grand-mama's sake?"

A soft expression passed over the widow's face, and she placed her arm affectionately round her daughter's neck.

"No, child," she answered after a pause.

"No one could have persuaded me to have given him up; and if I thought you really cared for any man as I did for him, what ever his position might be, I should advise you to marry him."

"I do love some one, mother mine," returned Rhoda, with a joyous look, "and I wonder you have never guessed my secret!"

"Do you mean Douglas FitzGerald?" asked Mrs. Christie, with interest.

"Yes, that is who I mean," said Rhoda, nestling closer to her mother's side, "and, darling, he is coming here to-morrow morning to ask you to let me be his wife!"

"And I suppose you have already promised him to be so before he comes," said Mrs. Christie, laughing. "Is not that correct, you naughty child?"

"I am afraid it is, mother," answered Rhoda, laughing too; "but I know you won't mind, darling, for I am so happy."

Mrs. Christie stooped and kissed her fondly.

"I hope you may always be as contented as you are now, my pet!" she answered, softly. "Douglas is a nice fellow, and I shall be pleased to acknowledge him as my son; and now run away, for I hear a ring at the bell. It may be Mr. Clementson, and, if so, you would rather avoid him I know."

"Indeed I would," said Rhoda, jumping up. "And mother, may I go down to the post office while he is here?"

"Yes, if you won't be long," returned the widow; "but do not remain out late, as it is already growing dusk;" and, as Rhoda left the room, Mrs. Christie looked at her retreating figure with a sad smile upon her face.

"It is a great disappointment to me," she murmured, half aloud; "but I must not stand in the way of her happiness," and in another second Mr. Clementson had entered the apartment.

He was a tall, thick-set man of fifty years of age, with iron-grey hair and short stubby beard. He had a hard, immovable expression of face, with cold, steel-coloured eyes; but he

had a courteous manner when he wished to make himself agreeable, and his position and wealth always made him a welcome guest to parents with marriageable daughters, notwithstanding that he was a widower, with a grown-up daughter of his own, and a nephew that he had adopted when a little boy, and whom he had brought up as his son and heir.

Mrs. Christie had spoken the truth when she said she admired this man of money, and it caused her a great deal of pain to tell him Rhoda had declined to accept his offer; but she did so in a few well-chosen words, saying that at the time she had promised to speak to her on the subject she was unaware that her affections were previously engaged, and begged him to forgive her for any disappointment she had unintentionally caused him.

But Mr. Clementson was not the man to forgive any one who offended him, and after having scolded the poor little widow nearly out of her senses by a torrent of words about how disgracefully he had been treated, he left the room with a rough "good evening," and walked indignantly down the stairs, and out of the house.

A few steps down the street he met Rhoda returning from the post-office, and she stopped in front of her with ill-concealed passion in his usually cold eyes.

"Miss Christie," he said, in a hard voice, "your mother has informed me of your engagement, and I wish you joy in the life of poverty you have chosen for yourself; but you may yet learn to regret having declined to be my wife, for sooner or later I will have my revenge."

And before Rhoda could find words to answer him, he had passed by, and she found herself alone, and, startled by his threatening manner, she hurriedly returned to the lodging-house, and running up to their sitting-room she fell weeping into her mother's outstretched arms.

CHAPTER II.

THE COUSINS.

MR. CLEMENTSON returned to Fairlight Hall in anything but an amiable frame of mind, and with very bitter feelings in his heart against Rhoda; and so inconsistent was his nature, that, although a few short hours before he had told himself he loved her, and desired to make her his wife, he then hated her with all the strength of his mind, and was determined not to rest until he had had his revenge for the disappointment she had caused him. He smiled as he thought how much he would enjoy making her suffer; but so far he had not the slightest idea how to injure her, and he was in no hurry whatever to do so. He simply intended to wait and watch until a good opportunity came for him; and having so decided, he retired to his smoking-room to have his usual cigar before joining his daughter and nephew in the drawing-room, where they always passed their evenings singing duets.

Eva Clementson and Oliver McDonald thoroughly understood each other, and were the best of friends. They had been brought up together since early childhood, and had never had a quarrel in their lives; and it was Mr. Clementson's greatest wish that Eva and his dead sister's son should marry, and thus inherit his property jointly.

Mrs. Clementson had died when Eva was a baby, and, up to the time that he met Rhoda Christie, the thought of filling her place had never entered his mind; but not wishing Eva to lack a mother's care, he had persuaded his young widowed sister to bring her three-year-old son and live with him.

As she had been left with very slender means she gladly accepted his offer, and, in return for the devotion she always showed to Eva, Mr. Clementson promised her to be a father to Oliver.

He was brought up as his heir, and he was quite determined that the two children, when

they entered man and womanhood, should become united in the bonds of matrimony. And now that Oliver had become twenty-three, and Eva was of age, he began to wonder why he heard of no engagement between them.

He had very broadly hinted his views on the subject to Oliver before he had started for Mrs. Christie's lodgings to receive Rhoda's decision, which he had never doubted for one second would be in his favour; and he thought it would be pleasant for him and Rhoda if the two young people would marry and settle down in a house he intended to provide for them before he brought a fresh mistress to Fairlight Hall, for ever since Mrs. McDonald's death, four years previous, Eva had reigned supreme.

He had no wish to make her or Rhoda feel uncomfortable; on the contrary, he really believed he was making satisfactory arrangements for everyone around him.

He knew he had taken a great fancy to Rhoda, and, although he was old enough to be her father, he thought he could make her happy; and, to ensure her from all anxiety about her mother, he had offered Mrs. Christie a place in his home as long as she lived.

Mr. Clementson and Mr. Christie had been friends for many years, and so he took a great interest in Rhoda and her mother for the dead man's sake, as well as for their own; and when he knew they were left in poverty—owing to the loss of nearly all Mr. Christie's money by a bank failure just before his death—Mr. Clementson felt truly sorry for them, and, about six months later, he made up his mind to ask Rhoda to be his wife.

He fully believed she would be only too glad to accept him, particularly as he had stated he would settle a thousand a year on her for life, which he knew would in no way interfere with what he intended to leave his daughter and Oliver McDonald.

As for them, it never entered his head that they should be so foolish as to so completely go against their own interest as to have a thought apart from each other.

He imagined he was giving Oliver a helping hand when he so clearly hinted it was now the right time for him to propose to his cousin; and he had been decidedly surprised when he saw the look of astonishment on his nephew's face.

Still he was so taken up with his own affairs that the subject soon passed out of his mind, but not so out of Oliver McDonald's; for, although he loved Eva with a true, brotherly affection, he had never once thought of her as his future wife.

It was a decided shock to him when he too plainly saw the meaning of his uncle's words, especially as his heart was entirely set on winning a sweet-looking girl named Ethel Lindesay.

He felt without her for his life's companion he should have very little pleasure in existence, so, in an unusually dreamy mood, he joined his cousin Eva for their practice; but she, noticing his preoccupied manner, suggested that they should have a quiet talk instead; and for some minutes she chatted on, telling him of all the amusing little incidents that had happened during the day. At length she paused and looked at him, and, taking his hand gently in hers, she asked him if he were in any trouble.

"No, Eva, I am only rather bothered this evening, but there is nothing much the matter," he replied uneasily.

"Do tell me what it is, Oliver," pleaded the girl. "Rest assured I will help you all I can."

"I know you would, but I hardly like to tell you what is troubling me."

"You hardly like to tell me!" she answered, smiling up at him. "Well, that is good. I thought we had told each other all our worries ever since we could speak. I don't think you need be very much afraid of me, old boy, so confess at once, what is the matter with you."

"Well, the fact is, Eva," he returned, with a crimson flush spreading over his face,

"the fact is, my uncle thinks it is time that I married and settled down."

"You marry!" she answered, going off into peals of laughter. "Nonsense! Father must have been joking you, for who ever do you think would marry a boy like you? Why I don't believe your moustache can boast of more than a dozen hairs at present. No, no, Oliver; dad was only chaffing you. Depend upon it the girls won't even look at you for the next five years!"

"You're complimentary, certainly," said Oliver McDonald, half-amused, but with a relieved expression passing over his face at the same time. "I suppose you mean you would not look at me in the light of a husband?"

"I? Good gracious, no!" she replied, with intense amusement. "When I marry I shall require something awfully too—too in my husband! Only fancy how slow it would be to become engaged to you! Why, you and I are like brother and sister!"

"Of course we are, 'cos," returned Oliver, laughing at Eva's innocent way of expressing her feelings. "But I am not like a brother to other girls, you know; and a fellow of twenty-three can scarcely be called a boy, even though he may have only twelve hairs in his moustache."

"Poor old chap!" she laughed, "did I touch on your tender point! Well, never mind, rub our cat's tail on your lip night and morning, and it will make it grow as if by magic. I can't think of any other suggestion to make!"

"Can't you talk sense, Eva?" asked Oliver, impatiently.

"Of course I can," she answered, in perfect good humour. "Let me see, you began by telling me you were in trouble because you thought dad wanted you to settle down; but I don't believe he meant it for one second, and if he did, what does it matter? Tell him you don't mean to do it, and there the subject will end."

"If he should say anything to you, Eva, will you stand my friend, and ask him to let both you and me choose our own mates in our own time?"

"Of course I will," she answered, turning suddenly grave, as she thought of what her father's wishes might be, although the idea had never struck her before. "I will make him clearly understand my feelings on that point, and now don't worry yourself any more; and if ever you meet a nice girl who can really give you love for love, come and tell me at once, and rest assured I will help you if I can."

"How kind you are, Eva, dear!" replied Oliver gently, and placing his arm around her he gave her a warm kiss on her broad white brow; and at that moment Mr. Clementson entered the room, and smiled as he thought that Oliver had lost no time in carrying out his wishes.

CHAPTER III.

"YOU NEED NO LONGER CONSIDER YOURSELF MY HEIR."

A WEEK passed, and Mr. Clementson grew decidedly uneasy at his nephew's silence; and calling him into his study one morning, he asked him if he had or had not understood the meaning of his words on that previous occasion when they had spoken together.

"I fear I did understand you, uncle," replied Oliver McDonald, quietly, "and I regret that neither Eva or I feel inclined to carry out your wishes!"

"Do you deliberately tell me that you decline to marry my daughter?" asked Mr. Clementson, with rising passion.

"I should be sorry to put it in such rough language, uncle," returned Oliver, with feeling. "I can only tell you that Eva and I have been too much brought up as brother and sister to think of each other with any deeper affection; and I hope, for both our

sakes, you will say no more on the subject, for I should be truly grieved if Eva was in any way annoyed."

"Am I to understand that you have proposed to Eva, and she has refused you?" demanded Mr. Clementson, hotly.

"No, uncle, I have not asked her to be my wife, and I never could do so, for my whole heart is given to Miss Ethel Lindesay, and she is the only girl in the world that I could marry."

"And does Miss Lindesay know of your wonderful devotion to her?" inquired the elder man, sarcastically.

"Yes, I gained her father's consent to an engagement between us yesterday, and to-day I had intended to ask for yours; and I hope, uncle, you will make no objection to our union, for my whole happiness depends on making her my partner for life."

"Have you told your cousin your wishes?" inquired Mr. Clementson, coldly.

"I have, and she sincerely congratulates me on my good fortune in winning the love of so sweet a woman as Ethel."

"Oh! does she?" returned Mr. Clementson, with a malicious twinkle in his eyes; "and I will give the young lady an opportunity of proving her affection, inasmuch as you need no longer consider yourself my heir! So go and tell her so as soon as you like, and then you will see whether she loves you enough to become the wife of a beggar!"

"If that is your decision, sir, I will go and inform Ethel without delay, and I believe she will wait for me until I can make her a home, and I must find some employment immediately. I only wish that you had not brought me up as an idle man, as I don't know what I am fit for."

"Nothing, I should say," replied Mr. Clementson, coldly, "but that is your look-out. And now I think our conversation is at an end. You can continue to reside here until you have found some work and some suitable rooms. I don't suppose Eva will object to your doing so."

"What shall I not object to?" asked Eva Clementson, who had just entered the apartment in time to hear the end of her father's speech.

"Mr. Clementson was then saying that perhaps you would not mind my living here a few weeks longer," said Oliver McDonald, a little bitterly.

"What on earth are you both talking about?" said Eva, looking from one to the other in astonishment.

"Simply this, my dear," answered Mr. Clementson, coldly. "Your cousin chooses to disobey me, and therefore I have informed him I will have nothing more to do with him."

"But you did not mean it, father," said Eva gently. "You could not break all your promises to his poor dead mother?"

For a moment a softened expression passed over the elder man's face, then he tried to set it aside, and replied impatiently,—

"I will not allow you to canvass my actions, Eva. I am quite aware what I promised my sister; but circumstances alter cases, and I can no longer regard Oliver in the light of a son."

"Why not, father dear?" inquired Eva, softly. "The promises to the dead are too sacred to be broken for any light reason, so tell me what Oliver has done to vex you?"

"Mr. Clementson is annoyed with me because I have asked Ethel to be my wife," said Oliver McDonald, with rising colour; "but I still intend to marry her if she will have me as a poor man."

"Of course you do," returned Eva, firmly. "And father is the last man in the world to ask you to break your word to her. It would not be honourable; would it, dad?"

"I decline to be catechised by my own child," said Mr. Clementson, crossly, "so be good enough to leave the room, Eva."

Tears came into the girl's eyes, but she drove them back, and with gentle persistence

she took her father's hand in hers, and looked lovingly into his face.

"Father," she said, quietly, "you and Oliver are so very much to me; so, for my sake, do not quarrel; and for my sake, dear, let Oliver marry Ethel Lindesay, for he loves her truly, and he cannot be happy without her."

"I really thought you had more sense, Eva," replied Mr. Clementson, roughly pushing her away. "For no one's sake will I forgive him; and if you talk any more sentimental rubbish I will disinherit you too."

"I am sorry we have both vexed you," said Eva, going to her cousin's side, and placing her hand through his arm; "but remember, father, I think Oliver is quite right to be true to the woman he loves, and it is my intention to help him all I can for his mother's sake, and his own," and without another word she led Oliver McDonald from the room and gently closed the door.

"Eva you are a brick!" exclaimed her cousin, as soon as they had entered the "marning room." "How can I ever repay you for standing my friend?"

"I don't want any payment, Oliver," she answered affectionately. "I only wish I could really have helped you, but you must forgive father for being cross, and do your best to work hard for a time, and I believe after a few years it will all come right again."

"No, it never can come right, 'cos," said Oliver, dejectedly. "I only hope that Mr. Lindesay won't turn me off too, because I am now a poor man."

"I am certain he won't," said Eva, brightly, "as I am sure he is really fond of you, and very likely he will give you some employment himself. He said the other day how much he wanted to find a trustworthy fellow to oversee his men do their work, instead of looking after them so constantly himself. And I will go with you at once, and persuade him to give the situation to you."

"Will you really, Eva? Then, indeed, you will be helping me," said Oliver, gratefully.

"I want to if I can," she replied, brightly, and a few minutes more she and Oliver McDonald were walking briskly along towards "Greenholm," the residence of Mr. Lindesay and his daughter, and an hour later Eva returned to her home with a lighter heart, for she had obtained Mr. Lindesay's promise to give Oliver the employment he so much needed; and also it was settled that the young people should be married without delay, and that they should settle down at "Greenholm" and take care of the old man, as Ethel could not make up her mind to leave her father on such short notice, especially as she had been his shadow ever since the death of her much-loved mother only two years before.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ONE RULING PASSION OF HIS LIFE.

A MONTH later, and the bells of Lake Crescent Church rang out merrily in honour of the wedding of Ethel Lindesay and Oliver McDonald, and after a few weeks spent at a quiet watering-place they returned home to take care of Mr. Lindesay, and a right warm welcome the old man gave them.

The three settled down together, and very soon Oliver had the sole management of his father-in-law's business, as he began to feel the work too much for him—as he owned a good-sized pottery a few miles off from Lake Crescent—and he was glad to escape the fatigue of going to oversee the work.

It did not take Oliver long to learn his duties, and he would return to "Greenholm" every evening with a light and happy heart, feeling really the better for having been usefully employed.

Oliver in no way forgot his Cousin Eva's kindness to him, and whenever he could spare the time he and Ethel used to go and spend an hour or two with her, and try and cheer her lonely life; and very often they persuaded

her to return to "Greenholm" with them, and occasionally get her to remain there for two or three days; but that was not very often, as it so increased her father's anger against her for remaining friends with Oliver and his wife that she had to pay dearly for her holiday on her return to Fairlight Hall.

Try however much she might, she could not soften Mr. Clementson's heart towards his dead sister's son; but she remained true to Oliver herself, and firmly told her father she never meant to give up looking upon him as a good and kind brother, for she had had a sister's affection for him ever since she had been a tiny child.

One day, about a year later, Mr. Clementson informed Eva since she had been so persistent in disobeying his wishes he had made up his mind to travel; and that she could either remain at Fairlight Hall with a suitable companion whom he would find for her, or leave her home for ever and take up her abode with Oliver and his wife, and he would then pay her a yearly allowance and remain abroad for an indefinite period.

He gave Eva a week to make up her mind, and during that time Oliver and Ethel persuaded her to settle to go to them, for old Mr. Lindesay had entered his eternal rest, and left his pottery to Oliver and his daughter jointly.

As Ethel often felt very lonely during the day she laughingly told Eva she wanted her to come and be her companion, and also to help her to take care of her six-weeks-old boy, whom she declared she could not manage by herself, and who was far too precious to be entrusted to a nurse, however good her character, or old her experience!

So, having told Mr. Clementson her decision, he was not long before he bid Eva farewell, and Fairlight Hall was left in charge of the aged housekeeper and her husband, and Eva was soon comfortably settled at Greenholm, while her father travelled about from place to place seeking happiness, and finding none.

Mr. Clementson was absolutely a miserable man. Ever since the day that Rhoda Christie had refused to become his wife he had hardened his heart against every living creature, and he so cultivated the longing for revenge against Rhoda that it grew at last to be the one ruling passion of his life; and each day he was more and more determined that he would make her suffer if he could, and one of his objects in going about from one part of the world to the other was to seek for her, as he knew she was married and living abroad with her husband; but he had been unable to trace her further than Paris, and then he had lost all clue as to her whereabouts.

The truth really was that Rhoda and her mother were so frightened by Mr. Clementson's threatening manner that they had left Lake Crescent as soon as possible, and Douglas Fitzgerald had persuaded Mrs. Christie to allow him to make Rhoda his wife without delay, and go with him at once to Paris, where he had to do some business. And to this Mrs. Christie consented, feeling it better that her daughter should have a proper protector. She also consented to accompany them to France, and make her home with them as long as she lived; but that, poor soul, was only to be for a few short weeks, as she caught a severe chill on the journey, and, in her weak state of health, she was unable to recover from it, so she gradually sank away from low fever, and was laid to rest in a Parisian cemetery.

Rhoda would gladly have taken her to England, to be buried beside the husband she had so devotedly loved; but neither Rhoda or Douglas Fitzgerald had sufficient means to incur such a heavy expense, and the wish had to be given up. For some time after her mother's death Rhoda was quite inconsolable, so dear had they been to each other. But little by little she grew to lean on Douglas, who, by his great patience and kindness to her, drew her out of her sorrow. And, although she knew she could never cease to mourn for the good mother she had lost, she

saw that she ought to be thankful for the love of so tender a guardian, and she made an effort to rouse herself for her husband's sake, and the smiles at length returned to her face, although the dull sadness did not leave her heart.

And so time went by until six months had passed since Mrs. Christie's death, and a piece of fortune came to Douglas FitzGerald, none the less welcome because quite unexpected.

An old maiden aunt of his died, and, much to his astonishment, left him an income of three thousand a-year, and expressed a wish that he should take her name, which, as she was his mother's sister, was quite different to his own.

This, of course, he was willing to do, but he saw no reason for telling his acquaintances in Paris the luck that had come to him, so he simply sent in his resignation to the firm he worked for; and when he could finish up his business for them Rhoda and he quietly left for England, where they remained until Miss Armstrong's affairs were settled. Then they made up their minds to travel about and see the world before they settled down to a country life, which they intended to do later on, after they were tired of roaming from place to place, and as Mr. and Mrs. FitzGerald-Armstrong they left their native soil.

As they were nearly always called Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong by their newly-made friends and acquaintances, it was not wonderful that Mr. Clementson should inquire for them in vain; but his want of success only made him more anxious for revenge, and each day he grew more determined never to rest until he had satisfied his heart's desire.

CHAPTER V.

MR. CLEMENTSON'S REVENGE.

Just six months later Rhoda and her husband visited Cyprus, taking with them their little infant son, who was the joy and happiness of both their hearts. They simply worshipped the wee child, and, like most parents, they thought there never was such a lovely baby before.

But Rhoda was not strong, and some time after they had arrived at Cyprus she fell ill, and for many weeks she was quite unable to leave the hotel, and when she did how fearfully changed she was!

Every movement denoted intense mental pain—every look was full of anguish, and it was in vain that Mr. FitzGerald-Armstrong tried to rouse her, for she could not be comforted—for during her illness her nurse and child had suddenly disappeared, and it was supposed that they had been washed out to sea during a severe storm that had arisen without any warning, a few minutes after they had been seen walking near the shore; and as some articles of clothing were discovered after the tide went down that belonged to baby Douglas, there was no doubt as to what his fate had been, and that of his attendant, especially as several other people had lost their lives on the same day; for the hurricane had been so unexpected, and the sudden violence of the sea so great, as to put every one near in confusion, and there was hardly a person present who was capable of giving any clear or decided evidence; and there was nothing to be done for Rhoda and her husband but to bear the sorrow that had come to them, and cling to each other for sympathy and support.

One friend and would-be sympathiser they had, whose attentions and kindly words utterly astonished them; for a few days after their arrival at Cyprus they had accidentally met Mr. Clementson, and as he showed so much pleasure at renewing his acquaintance with Rhoda, and was so courteous and nice to them both, they could not find it in their hearts to give him the "cold shoulder," although neither of them were pleased to have the so-called friendship revived after what had passed between Rhoda and himself on the evening she had refused to be his wife.

But a long time had elapsed since then, and Mr. Clementson appeared to be an altered man; and Rhoda felt it would be ungenerous on her part to remember his words against him, believing, as she did, they had been spoken when disappointment and anger had made him not answerable for what he had said.

So she and Douglas agreed to be polite to him as long as they were in Cyprus, but to try and avoid giving him their address after they had left, and thus evade him without apparent incivility.

And having thus decided, they saw as little of him as possible, but they were always hospitable to him when he visited them at their hotel.

And when their sorrow came, and Mr. Clementson was so good and thoughtful, they quite blamed themselves for the feeling of mistrust that they ever felt towards him, and they told each other they were doing him a great injustice to harbour unkind ideas about him—for they were only ideas—and neither Rhoda or her husband could really put into words what they feared from coming in contact with him, especially as nothing could exceed his show of good-nature towards them.

On the day of the storm Douglas Armstrong, seeing that his wife was very much better than she had been for many weeks, left her for a few hours to go and see a friend of his, who, he heard, was staying for a short time about ten miles distance from their present abode.

As it was a glorious morning he determined to walk all the way, and set out on his little journey with a light heart.

He met Mr. Clementson soon after he had left the hotel, and to avoid his trying to accompany him he told him where he was going, and after a short conversation the two men bid each other adieu; and early in the afternoon Mr. Clementson wended his way towards the "Hôtel Métropole" to keep Rhoda company during her husband's absence.

On the road he came across baby Douglas and his young nurse, and he paused to speak to them, and then passed on with an evil look upon his face.

"Her child!" he muttered, with his hands clenched, "and she is happy, but it shall not last. No, no! Sooner or later I will make her suffer; but I must wait my time to avoid suspicion! At present I must be her friend."

And he smiled as he thought how cleverly he was acting his part; and a minute or two later he was sitting beside Rhoda, listening with deep interest to her account of the latter days of her mother's life, and expressing great regret that he had been unable to show her any attention during her last illness.

Just as Rhoda's heart was softening under the influence of his kind words the hurricane suddenly began, and, fearing for her child's safety, she begged him to try and help her find out where her nurse had gone, so as to get them home as quickly as possible.

Mr. Clementson lost no time in obeying her wishes, only persuading her, as she had not been out since her illness, to remain quietly indoors, promising to do his utmost to find her boy, and to restore him to her without delay.

Mr. Clementson remembered where he had met them, and guessed what route the nurse had taken, but he ordered several of the servants to go in opposite directions, in case he was mistaken. Then he hurriedly made his way out of sight, with bitter and contending passions working in his breast.

For three hours the storm raged with intense violence, and self-preservation seemed to be the one thing everybody thought of; but even that was no easy matter, for there was danger everywhere—by the sea, and on land; for many of the smaller houses were blown down, and the people were rushing for shelter to all the larger buildings, pushing and hustling each other as they went, as if their lives were not as precious as their own.

All the while Rhoda stood by the window

watching for her child, wringing her hands in silent agony, and praying that no harm might come to him or to her husband, who might, for aught she knew, be out in the storm too.

The hotel servants returned one by one, but they brought her no good news; and last of all Mr. Clementson went to her with an expression of well feigned pity on his usually hard face, and told her with great gentleness that he feared her nurse and child had been washed out to sea, as he had made every inquiry. All he could hear of them was that they had been walking on the shore when the storm first began, but that no one had noticed them since; and although he had been searching for them for nearly three hours he had been unable to find a trace of them.

Rhoda listened to his account with tearless eyes, becoming paler every second; and at length, with a moan, she sank senseless to the ground. And when Douglas Armstrong came back to the hotel an hour later, he found her still unconscious, although Mr. Clementson had sent for two medical men, and had seen that everything had been done that was possible to think of. He had also despatched a conveyance to fetch Douglas Armstrong, and it had met him by the way; and when he got to the "Hôtel Métropole" Mr. Clementson led him into his private sitting-room, and told him all that had occurred; and after clasping his hand with tender sympathy, he left him to go and attend to his wife, and promised to continue his search for the lost child, and return in the evening to tell him if he had had any success.

At nightfall he went, and said a baby's cloak had been picked up after the tide had receded, with a great many other things belonging to different people, and he felt sure the cloak had been the one worn by little Douglas; and he advised Mr. Armstrong to go to the place where they were all on view, and see if he could identify it.

Rhoda was then asleep with a trained nurse watching her, so Douglas Armstrong allowed Mr. Clementson to take him without delay, and show him the cloak, and he was not long in recognising it as being the one his child had worn. And after having made many more inquiries after the missing baby and nurse he returned to the hotel again as a man without hope; and when days had passed into weeks, and nothing had been heard of the lost pair, he felt perfectly convinced as to what had been their sad fate.

He did his best to make Rhoda rouse herself for his sake, and the two broken-hearted parents leant on each other for support, making their trouble draw them ever closer together, although for a time Rhoda's grief seemed almost beyond the reach of human sympathy; and Mr. Clementson, watching her mental anguish, felt that however much she loved her husband she was utterly unhappy, and seeing her misery more than contented him. He gave a smile of deep satisfaction that he had had his revenge at last!

CHAPTER VI.

THE WANDERER'S RETURN.

VERY soon after Eva Clementson went to live with Oliver McDonald and his nice young wife, she met the love of her life, and she was not long in discovering the fact, or in seeing that Horace Wallpole loved her with all his heart; and before he had known her many weeks he had openly declared his affection for her, and made her promise to be his wife as soon as he could prepare a suitable home for her to live in.

He wrote to Mr. Clementson and asked his consent to his marrying Eva; and as Horace was the only son of a Colonel in the army who had been killed in action a short time before, and had left him very well provided for, Mr. Clementson made no objections to the match, and wrote to Eva to wish her all

happiness, and even went so far as to regret that he would not be in England when she was married.

He could have been had he really desired it, but he had so given himself up to his own pleasure and comfort that he cared not to set his plans on one side for any one—not even his own daughter; and he considered he had done all that could be expected of him when he wrote and gave her his good wishes.

Eva answered his letter, and promised to write and tell him when she became Horace's wife; and she kept her word, and gave him a full description of her wedding, and of the pretty home her husband had prepared for her in a village called Silverdale, a few miles from Lake Crescent.

So that she was not divided from her cousins at Greenholme, who had been so kind and attentive to her; and after a couple of months Eva received a note from her father that it was quite impossible to keep her cognizant of his address, so he had made up his mind to give up all correspondence for some time, and that he had ordered his solicitors to send her the yearly allowance he had undertaken to make her, so that she was to see that she received the amount due to her every quarter day; and from the time she received that letter Eva never heard again from her father for twenty-three years, when he wrote to tell her he intended to return to England and settle down at Fairlight Hall, which was to be thoroughly restored before his advent.

Mr. Clementson also told her that he had married again, twenty-two years before, and that he was bringing his son, Norman, who was just coming of age, to England with him, so that he could take up his position as heir to the Fairlight estate.

Mr. Clementson also told Eva that his wife had died at Norman's birth, but that his son had been a great pleasure to him, and he hoped that she would find that she could give him a sister's welcome; and that although he had neglected her for so many years, he begged her to be good to him in his old age, as he did not feel that he had much longer to live.

Eva, ever a generous-hearted woman, forgave him all the past at once, and on the afternoon that he was expected home she and her husband went to Fairlight Hall to give the travellers a warm reception, and they took with them their only daughter, Jasmine, who was a sweet and lovely girl, nineteen years of age.

The meeting passed off in a very friendly manner, for Mr. Clementson was much taken with his son-in-law, and seemed anxious to make Horace like him in return, while to Eva he was really affectionate; and she, seeing how old and careworn he looked, lovingly promised to do her best to be a comfort to him in the declining years of his life.

As for Norman and Jasmine they seemed mutually delighted with each other; and after they became well acquainted, there was never a day that Norman did not fetch her to early dinner at Fairlight Hall, and take her home when it became dusk, and between them they made Mr. Clementson's old age a very bright one.

He seemed to become soft and different when he was in their presence, although a troubled look would occasionally pass over his face as he watched the growing intimacy between them; then with an effort he would rouse himself, and laughingly tell Norman not to fall in love with his own niece; and Norman and Jasmine would join in his joke, with little thought of how much sorrow was in store for them later on.

Oliver McDonald and his wife had both died a year before Mr. Clementson had thought of returning to England, and it was a real trouble to the old man that he had never been reconciled to his nephew before he had passed away.

He heard of his death from his solicitor, who always acquainted him with English news; and it was after hearing of Oliver's

decease that he made up his mind to return to Fairlight Hall, and let Norman take his place as heir to the estate, which he never liked to do during the lifetime of his sister's son; for although he had so seriously quarrelled with him, and had always been too proud to make the first advance of friendship, he never forgot how fond they had been of each other, or the promises he had made to Oliver's dead mother. Remembering them, he hesitated to let even Norman fill his place, and put off arranging his affairs year after year, unable to decide how to be just to all he loved after he should have joined the great majority, knowing that he had injured them all more or less by his unkind conduct and revengeful temper.

CHAPTER VII.

"NO ONE MUST KNOW THE SORROW OF OUR LIVES."

AFTER the death of Oliver McDonald and his gentle wife, their only son Reginald felt so thoroughly upset by the loss he had sustained that he determined to travel abroad for some years before he settled down to his life's work. So he hired a trustworthy man to manage the Pottery his father had bequeathed him, and took a passage to Australia as quickly as possible.

There was only one reason that he regretted leaving England, and that was, it pained him to say good-bye to his cousin Jasmine—she had been so very much to him ever since she was a tiny child. And when she began to approach womanhood he knew it was no ordinary affection that he felt for her, but one that would ripen into deep and lasting love.

Still when he left her to take his much-needed change, he decided to wait till his return to ask her to be his wife, feeling that she was too young then to be bound by any promises, especially as he was not at all sure that she cared for him in return in any serious light, and he hoped that she would grow fonder of him during his absence, and feel the need of his daily attentions.

For a long while she missed him greatly, for he had been her slave from earliest boyhood; but when Norman Clementson came to Fairlight Hall he more than filled his place, for Norman was quite her ideal. He was what her heart had pictured as perfect among men, and whenever she was with him she was intensely happy. Away from his side, she became restless, and uncertain to those around her—sometimes bright and loving, and at others so sad and depressed that her mother grew quite anxious about her; but knowing the impossibility of her marrying her own uncle, it did not enter her head that she could have any deep affection for him, and, remembering how devoted Reginald had always been to Jasmine, Mrs. Wallpole thought she must be fretting about him.

She wrote him a chatty letter, and told him what a nervous state his cousin was in, and ended by saying how glad she should be when he returned to England to take care of her again; and Mrs. Wallpole, thinking she had done a kindly act, never mentioned the subject to Jasmine at all. And when, four months later, she received an answer from Reginald McDonald to say he would be at Lake Crescent in about a week, she determined to keep the secret to herself, and give her daughter a happy surprise. Happy she never doubted it would be, for Reginald had openly stated in his letter that his affection for Jasmine was unaltered, and that he hoped that the future would bring much happiness to them all.

In the meantime things were not standing still between Norman Clementson and his niece. Each day they grew more and more dear to one another—each day the power of love seemed to draw them closer together; and feeling this they grew nervous and constrained in each others presence, hardly speaking when alone, and when in the company of their relations talking only in the general conversa-

tion, until Jasmine felt she could bear it no longer, and often pleaded a headache as an excuse to remain at home instead of paying her usual visits to her grandfather's, until Mrs. Wallpole felt thoroughly convinced that it was her cousin Reginald that she was fretting for, and she anxiously waited for his return.

At last he arrived; and, an hour after he had taken his luggage to "Greenholme," he made his way to the little village of Silverdale with a light heart, wondering what sort of a welcome Jasmine would give him, and what she would say to him when he asked her to be his wife.

Not wishing to be detained by meeting his old acquaintances by the road he sprang over a stile, and walked swiftly across some meadows, and then turned into an old wood which led right up to the little silver river called the "Silver Streak," and divided the village of Silverdale from that of Lake Crescent; and in summer the path through the wood was always considered a nearer way, and the river could be crossed by some pieces of stone which the villagers had put in for the purpose; but in winter the stream was impassable, for it became swelled and rough, and it was only safe to go over it by the large bridge that had been erected along the high road to connect the two places.

But on the day that Reginald McDonald was going to seek his cousin the Silver Streak was perfectly calm and low, and as it was a scorching August day he paused occasionally to enjoy the cool breeze that from time to time fluttered among the boughs of the thickly-studded trees.

It was while standing all hidden by the branches of a half-fallen oak that he saw two figures advancing slowly towards him, and presently they stopped quite close to where he was, and the words he heard them uttering rooted him to the ground as if bound by a spell; and he saw that one of the speakers was his cousin Jasmine, and that she was looking up at her companion with a half-pleading, wholly loving expression upon her lovely face.

"Jasmine! Jasmine, my darling!" said Norman Clementson. "I cannot live without you! What is the world's opinion worth when the happiness of our two lives is at stake? Oh, my love! my love! come to me! Let us defy the cold, calculating rules of society, and be married at once, and go abroad. It would be held legal in many places, if not in England. And what is that to us? Before Heaven you would be my loved and honoured wife! and I will swear to be true to you until my life's end!"

"Norman, my heart's love! pray—pray do not tempt me!" returned Jasmine. "I cannot, dare not, listen to you! What would my parents feel when they knew that I had deserted them for one who should, by all the laws of our religion, be nothing but a near and dear relation? No, no, Norman! Do not press me, I entreat you! We have both been weak, but we must not be wicked too! Indeed we must not!"

"Jasmine, you do not love me, or you could not speak in such a way!" said Norman, half reproachfully.

"Not love you!" she echoed, with tearful eyes. "I love you with my whole soul, Norman! and I promise you no other man shall ever call me wife! but I cannot be that to you, darling! I could not let you leave the path of honour for my sake!—no not if it kills me to live apart from you! And now, dear love, go home, and leave me alone for a little while! I could not face mother just yet, for she would soon see I was in trouble, and try and comfort me; and I could not bear it, for I dare not tell even her our terrible secret! Norman, it must be inviolate between us; no one must know the sorrow of our lives!"

"You are right, Jasmine," returned Norman Clementson, in a weary voice; "no one must know! and it will be better if we do not meet again just yet. I could not bear it, child, so good bye!" and, clasping her in his

arms, he gave her one long, passionate embrace.

Then, without another word, he left her alone; and, passing along the path as one in a dream, he at length entered the main road. Rousing himself with a supreme effort he walked to Fairlight Hall.

Arriving there, he went straight to his own room, and locked the door. Sinking into an easy chair, he buried his face in his hands.

"Oh, Jasmine, my love! my love!" he moaned, "I cannot live here without you! I shall go away!" and before the next morning dawned Norman Clementson had left his father's house without mentioning to anyone his intended plans.

CHAPTER VIII.

"YES, I WILL BE SILENT, JASMINE."

For some seconds Reginald McDonald stood as if rooted to the ground, listening to the lovers against his will; then, with a terrible effort, he moved away noiselessly, so as not to disturb them, feeling, however, his cousin might decide; it was not in his power to interfere, as he certainly had no right to dictate to her in any way.

He felt an utter loneliness come over him. He blamed himself again and again for not having remained in England.

No unkind thought towards Jasmine entered his mind. He knew that he had left her free, and he could not blame her for giving her love to another, although his own heart was craving for it with almost unbearable pain.

A great weariness came over him, and he sat down on the trunk of a fallen tree to rest, and remained there in deep thought until he was roused by Norman Clementson passing along the wooded path a few yards from where he was sitting.

The look of mental anguish on Norman's face as he walked by made Reginald McDonald spring to his feet, with a wild feeling of hope rising in his breast.

"Surely—surely she must have refused his love; and yet how could I have mistaken the tender look in her eyes, as she listened to his passionate pleading!" he murmured, half aloud.

Then he turned round quickly, and walked with hurried steps to try and find Jasmine before she left the wood. But he had not far to go, for he found her lying insensible under the very tree where he had seen her talking to his rival.

Bending down, he felt her pulse, and uttered a sigh of relief to find it was still beating, for Jasmine was looking so ashen-white, that at first he feared that she was dead; but, discovering that she was living, he knelt down beside her on the green sward; and, after loosening the tight collar that was around her neck, he took the small flask of brandy that he always carried in his pocket in case of accidents, and poured some gently into her mouth. By degrees she persuaded her to swallow it, and at last she opened her eyes, and regarded him with an almost frightened expression of face.

"Well, Jasmine," he said, softly, "are you feeling better? I have returned just in time to nurse you, you see," and he raised her into a sitting posture as he spoke.

"Reginald, where have you come from?" asked Jasmine. "I had no idea you were in England."

"Had you not? And yet I wrote and told Mrs. Wallpole of my advent; but perhaps she never received my letter."

"Perhaps not, for she never mentioned it," said Jasmine, dreamily.

"But now that I am here, have you no words of welcome for me, Jasmine? Remember how much we were to each other before I went abroad," said Reginald McDonald, in a pleading voice.

"I remember, Rex," she replied, trying to smile at him, "and I am very pleased to see

you again; but tell me, dear, how long have you been in the wood? I thought that—that I was quite alone!"

"I have been here some time, little woman," he answered, kindly, "and I must confess to have been an unwilling listener to a part of your conversation with your friend who has just left you. But you need not look so troubled, dear, for if you wish it I will keep your secret."

"Thank you, Rex," said Jasmine, in a relieved tone of voice. "I am sorry you should have seen us together; but I can trust you and rely upon your silence, for I do not wish my parents to know anything about my private affairs. It would only distress them."

"Surely, little Jasmine, it would be better to give your mother your confidence if you have any sorrow?" said Reginald McDonald, gravely. "She was ever so kind and sympathetic to you on all occasions, and I ask you, as a favour, to go to her now and tell her all that is in your heart; for Jasmine, dear, from what I heard that fellow say to you I am afraid he was not trying to lead you down a right path. I fear your future, if you have no wiser head than your own to help and advise you."

"Reginald," replied Jasmine, somewhat haughtily, "I am quite old enough to decide for myself about what is right or wrong. Rest assured I shall never bring disgrace upon my name, nor will the gentleman you saw me talking to. You have promised me to be silent, and I shall rely upon your honour to be so."

"Yes. I will be silent, Jasmine," returned Reginald McDonald, sadly; "but tell me one thing before I leave you. Do you love that man?"

"With all my heart and soul," replied Jasmine, fervently; "but there are reasons why we can be nothing more to each other than we are already."

"My little cousin," said Reginald McDonald, with intense feeling, "remember how much we were to one another before I left England; and believe me, sweet girl, when I tell you that you are as dear to my heart now as you were then. I ask you to make a friend of me. Give me your confidence, Jasmine, if you refuse to give it to your mother for fear of paining her. You say you love that fellow with all your heart and soul, then why don't you have an open engagement and marry him later on with your parents' consent? Tell me your secret, and, if possible, I will help you to be happy with the man of your choice."

"I will trust you, Cousin Rex," said Jasmine, clasping his outstretched hand warmly; "but it is quite impossible for you to assist me, for Norman Clementson, who is the only being in the world I could ever care for, is my uncle, so that, I think, is reason enough for keeping us apart."

"Your uncle!" repeated Reginald McDonald, gravely. "Poor little Jasmine! Then I cannot help you after all, although I would sacrifice my very life to make you happy."

"I am the only one who can help you," said Reginald McDonald, gravely. "I am the only one who can help you."

CHAPTER IX.

"HE MUST BE FOUND WITHOUT DELAY."

REGINALD McDONALD remained a long time in the wood talking to Jasmine, and then he walked with her as far as her father's gate and left her there, feeling too much upset to talk to her parents should they be at home; for although he had generously put his own wishes on one side to try and comfort his cousin in her sorrow, he knew that he loved her with a deep and true affection, and that no other woman in the world could ever fill her place in his heart. But he was determined that he would bear his disappointment bravely for Jasmine's sake, and never even tell her how he longed to make her his wife, for he knew it would only add to her own trouble to see him suffer so; and as she had

openly told him how much she cared for Norman Clementson, he made up his mind to be a true friend to her, and do his best to comfort her and make her life a bright one.

So the following morning he went over to Silverdale, and Mr. and Mrs. Wallpole gave him a warm welcome. The blush which arose on Jasmine's face as they exchanged greetings, convinced her parents that their surmises concerning the cousins had been correct; and they hoped, now that Reginald had returned, that Jasmine's health would improve, and that she would soon be her old cheerful self again.

They were talking about Reginald's unexpected appearance (which Mrs. Wallpole laughingly confessed she had known of for some time, but had wished to give them all a pleasant surprise) when a carriage drove hurriedly up to the hall door, and Mr. Clementson was announced. He was looking pale and agitated, and taking his daughter by the hand, he asked her in a trembling voice if she had seen Norman, as he had deserted his home, and his bed had not been slept in the night before.

"Where can he have gone?" said Eva and her husband together.

"He has not been here for several days, and I don't think Jasmine has seen him either," continued Mrs. Wallpole, turning to her daughter questioningly.

"I saw him yesterday," answered the girl, nervously, "but he did not tell me he was going away, although he said something about my not seeing him again just yet; but I did not realize that he intended to leave home."

"Did he give any reason for saying he should not come and see you?" asked Mr. Clementson, regarding her keenly.

"He said nothing that I can repeat, grandfather," replied Jasmine, with tears in her eyes.

"Nothing that you can repeat, child!" echoed Mr. Clementson, in a startled voice. "For Heaven's sake tell me if he knew—if he had discovered anything that troubled his mind, or made him unhappy? Keep nothing back, I entreat you."

"I think he was in trouble," said Jasmine, scarcely above a whisper, "but it is not in my power to tell you his secret."

"His secret! Then he has found out all!" said Mr. Clementson, brokenly, "and he has deserted me in my old age as a punishment for my sin," and in another second he had fallen to the ground, and lay there in a senseless state.

"Oh, father! what is the matter with you?" said Eva, kneeling down beside his prostrate form, and raising his head gently.

"Jasmine, dear, if you know what your grandfather means tell us at once!" said Mr. Wallpole, eagerly.

"I cannot understand his words at all, father," replied the girl, in a bewildered tone of voice. "They are as mysterious to me as they can possibly be to you."

"Let me help you lift Mr. Clementson on to the sofa," said Reginald McDonald to Mr. Wallpole. "He has evidently something troubling his mind, and it has been too much for him. The sooner the doctor is fetched the better. I will jump into the old man's carriage, and bring Mr. Carter back with me," and having laid Mr. Clementson on the couch he hurried out of the room, leaving the others to use such restoratives as they could think of; but they could not get him round at all. And when Mr. Carter arrived he looked very grave, and pronounced it to be a very serious attack of syncope, and ordered him to bed without delay.

Mr. Wallpole and Reginald McDonald carried Mr. Clementson up to the spare room (which happened to be in perfect readiness, as they were expecting some visitors that evening to remain and sleep), and with the doctor's help he was soon undressed, and the time he was in bed Mrs. Wallpole and Jasmine had the mustard plasters made, which were put on immediately; and, after

that, neither Mr. Carter or Mrs. Wallpole left his side for many hours, waiting on him continually, till at last his consciousness returned, and he looked round the room with a troubled expression on his face.

"Norman," he whispered. "Where is he? I must see him before I die."

"Do not talk of dying, father," said Eva, sadly. "You must live for all our sakes."

"You are worth a dozen dead men yet," said Mr. Carter, cheerily; "and if you keep quite quiet, I hope you will feel much better to-morrow."

"I shall never be much better again," returned Mr. Clementson, gravely; "and I cannot rest until I have seen Norman, for I have a great deal to say to him."

"Then we will send for him at once," said the doctor kindly. "Mrs. Wallpole, I will leave it to you to let your brother know his father wishes to have a chat with him, and I will go and call on my other patients, as I expect they will think I have deserted them," and with a parting hand clasp with Mr. Clementson he left the room, followed by Eva Wallpole.

"How do you really think my father is?" she inquired, anxiously, as soon as they were alone.

"While there is life there is hope," replied Mr. Carter, solemnly; "but I fear he will never recover, and at his age if he had another attack it might be fatal. Therefore he must have constant attention, day and night, and, above all things, he must be kept perfectly quiet. He must not be allowed to worry or excite himself in any way."

"I will not leave him," replied Mrs. Wallpole decidedly; "but I cannot prevent his wronging himself, because he evidently wishes to see Norman, and we do not know what has become of him, for he went away from home early this morning, and I fear he has left us no address."

"That is very unfortunate," replied Mr. Carter, seriously, "but he must be found without delay," and bidding adieu to Mrs. Wallpole he left the house in silence.

CHAPTER X.

"I HAVE DECEIVED YOU ALL YOUR LIFE."

A WEEK later, as Norman Clementson was sitting in the office-room of a fashionable French hotel, he was surprised to see a pressing advertisement for him to return to Fairlight Hall in the "agony column" of the *Times*, and he read it again and again before he could realize he was the person it was intended for; but the sentence was plainly written, and it stated that his father was dying, and wished to see him; and before many hours had passed Norman was again on English soil, and he made his way as fast as he could to the home that he had deserted only a few days before.

He felt utterly miserable during his journey, for his father was more than dear to him; and although at the first rush of sorrow about Jasmine, he had forgotten all else, and had foolishly thought to find solace in a foreign land, where he decided to go as soon as he could get a steamer to take him, and where he hoped by living a life of solitude among strangers he would in time learn to forget. But now he saw his conduct in its true light, and he knew he had acted altogether wrongly, and he bitterly regretted the fact. He felt that, dearly as he loved Jasmine, it had been very selfish of him to try and persuade her to leave the path of honour for his sake, and then because she had chosen to do what was right, to leave her alone to bear her sorrow in the best way she could. And then, above everything, he blamed himself for deserting his father in his old age, instead of remaining to be a comfort and support to him in his last days; and the thought would come to his mind that if he had stayed at home Mr. Clementson might not have been taken ill, as he had

known for a long while, that he had been suffering from a delicate heart, and that he should not be worried on any subject.

So with very sad feelings he arrived at Fairlight Hall to find that his father was not there, but at Silverdale; and ordering the groom to get the dog-cart ready for him as quickly as possible, in less than half-an-hour he was at his sister's house, and Jasmine hearing his voice, ran to the door to meet him.

"Oh, Norman!" she said excitedly, "I am so thankful you have come! Poor grandfather asks for you every few minutes, and we have been so distressed at not being able to find you!"

"I am so sorry, darling!" he whispered back taking her hand tenderly in his own; "and I hope you will all forgive me. But tell me one thing, do they know the reason I went away?"

"No, dear!" replied Jasmine growing rosy red. "I have told them nothing, but I have much to say to you by-and-by, although I must not keep you with me now, for every second is important, so come upstairs at once."

"Poor old father!" said Norman, with feeling. "I am, indeed, grieved he is so ill." And he followed her, without another word, to the sick man's room, where he found Eva Wallpole and Reginald McDonald sitting by the bedside.

"Mother, here is Norman!" said Jasmine, opening the door softly.

"Norman," repeated Mr. Clementson starting up. "Oh! where is he? Let me see him before I—"

"Here I am father," said the young man brokenly. "Have you, indeed, a welcome for me after the unkind way I have treated you? Can you really forgive me?" and bending down he reverently kissed his father's brow, then turned away to hide his emotion; but Mr. Clementson detained him by laying his feeble hand upon his arm.

"Norman," he said, in a choking voice, "it is you who have to forgive—not I—for I have wronged you from childhood—have deceived you all your life."

"Nonsense," replied Norman gently. "You have ever been a good and indulgent parent to me, and it is only because you are not well, dear old pater, that your mind is troubled with such strange ideas."

"Would to Heaven that it was so," said Mr. Clementson solemnly.

"Poor father!" said Norman, turning to Mrs. Wallpole for the first time, and giving her an affectionate embrace; and then extending his hand to Reginald, as Jasmine whispered who he was. "Poor father, how sad it is he should have such a terrible delusion! How long has it lasted, Eva?"

"All through his illness, I fear," replied Mrs. Wallpole sadly. "I wish we could assure him there is no truth in his imaginations."

"But there is truth in them," cried the sick man excitedly. "I am not delirious, as you seem to think I am. So much the pity, for when the delirium had passed I should find rest, and die in peace. As it is, I shall neither find peace here or hereafter."

"Father, tell me what is in your heart," said Norman, putting his arm around his wasted form. "Tell me all your sorrow, dear old man, and let me help you bear it?"

"Oh! my boy, my boy!" said Mr. Clementson, with deep emotion, "no words could tell you how I love you—ay, and have loved you for years and years. Yet, when you know the truth, you will turn from me with repulsion, as if I were some deadly serpent that would poison you to come in contact with. Oh! I cannot, cannot tell you," and he sobbed aloud.

"Perhaps if I go away Mr. Clementson will feel that he can speak more freely," said Reginald McDonald to Mrs. Wallpole, rising to leave the room.

"No, no, sit down again!" said Mr. Clementson, earnestly. "I wish you all to hear how anyone can be led from sin to sin by

giving way to revengeful feelings; and I pray that watching the misery of my last hours may teach you to forgive every one who injures and annoys you, without seeking to be revenged upon them because they have made you to suffer."

"Are you thinking of poor Oliver, father?" asked Eva Wallpole, sadly. "If so, let me tell you he never said an unkind word about you, and when he was dying he spoke of you with much affection."

"Did he?" returned Mr. Clementson, feebly. "I am glad of that, for I was very unjust to him, poor fellow! But he was not the only being I injured. I only wish it was, Norman, my boy. It is you—you and your parents that I have the most cruelly wronged; and now that I am leaving this world I feel and know what a sinner I have been!"

"Father, what do you mean?" said Norman, quietly.

"Father!" repeated Mr. Clementson, almost wildly. "Norman, Norman, you must not call me that, for you—you are not my son!"

"Not your son!" echoed Norman, in dismay. "Oh! you must be dreaming, indeed you must; for you have ever been a father to me; and I, well, if I do not belong to you, can you explain whose son I am?"

"Yes!" returned Mr. Clementson, sinking back on his pillows exhausted. "Your rightful name is Douglas, and you are the son of Douglas and Rhoda Fitzgerald-Armstrong."

"Good Heavens!" said Reginald McDonald, springing up. "Is it possible you can mean what you say?"

"Quite," returned the old man, faintly, "and if I could only restore them their boy I might die happy after all."

"I will endeavour to find them for you," replied Reginald, excitedly, and left the room before any one could question him further.

"Pater," said Norman, gently, "there is evidently some mystery connected with me, and all I can say is I hope it may be cleared up, and that your poor mind may be set at rest, for I cannot believe you capable of any very wrong action; and if you have been, I can forgive you freely, because, dearly as I care for you, it would make me the happiest man in England to find I was not your son!"

"What are you talking about?" asked Mrs. Wallpole, rousing herself at his strange words, and trying to subdue the flood of tears that she was overcome with.

"I mean," said Norman, "if I am not the dear old fellow's son, I am not your daughter's uncle, and if I am no relation to her, there is no reason that I should not ask you to allow me to make her my wife, for I love her with all my soul!"

"You do!" said Mrs. Wallpole, in astonishment. "And what does Jasmine say, or have you not told her?" and she turned to look at Jasmine as she spoke.

"I say, mother, that if Norman is my uncle I will never marry any other; but I will remain single all my life!"

"Thank Heaven that I can make you happy then!" said Mr. Clementson, with an effort. "Jasmine, come here! and Norman—you will always be Norman to me;" he added, with a faint smile—"come here too. There, that is right," as he clasped the hands of the two young people together. "Now, if Eva has no objection to the match, you can be married as soon as you like, for you are not even connections to each other, and I hope you will both be blessed in your future lives!"

And before they could answer him he had fallen back insensible, and for some time they all thought that he was dead—so cold and still he lay upon his snow-white bed.

CHAPTER XI.

MR. CLEMENTSON'S CONFESSION.

It was many hours before Mr. Clementson rallied; and when he did so he showed symptoms of great exhaustion, and his voice

was intensely feeble. His eyes, as he gazed round the room, had an anxious and nervous expression in them; and, looking at Norman, he signalled for him to come to his side.

"Norman," he said, "do your best to find your parents, and tell them how deeply I regret having taken you away from them, although, as far as I am concerned, you have brightened and cheered my life!"

"Did I not go to you with their consent?" inquired Norman, otherwise Douglas Armstrong.

"No, my boy. I wanted to be revenged upon your mother because, at some former time, she had refused to be my wife. So, when I saw how happy she was with your father, and how she loved you too, I took you away during a violent storm, and pretended you were drowned. So cleverly did I manage it that they never guessed the truth; and I—I professed to be their friend and dearest sympathiser in their sorrow. And it was sorrow, too; for your poor mother utterly broke down, and for some time her life was almost despaired of, and that was my triumph. Oh! I remember how I gloried in her misery!"

"Pater, don't talk like that!" said Douglas Armstrong, sadly. "If what you say be true, I am sure you must have been very unhappy ever since."

"Not at first," answered Mr. Clementson, in an agitated voice; "but of late years I have bitterly regretted my conduct, although I never could make up my mind to find your parents, and acknowledge my wickedness, for there is a true saying, 'Conscience makes cowards of us all,' and mine, certainly, made one of me; for, although your mother's face has quite haunted me, I have not had the pluck to find her and hear the words of reproach which, doubtless, she would utter!"

"I can't help feeling sorry for you, pater," said Douglas Armstrong, gently, "and for my parents, too, for I fear they must have been very upset, from what you say; but we may be able to find them; and, if so, you will have the satisfaction of restoring me to them, and I will do my best to make them a good son, and render their old age happy."

"I hope so," replied Mr. Clementson, with emotion. "If you are as dutiful to them as you have always been to me, they will soon learn to love you dearly. But you must not expect to see your parents elderly people, for they can only be a little over forty now, as they both married very early in life."

"I am so glad!" said Douglas Armstrong, brightly, "for I shall delight in having a young mother! But how are they going to identify me? They may not believe I am their son at all!"

"I think they will remember the scar you have on your left arm," replied Mr. Clementson, with an effort; "and in the tin box which I always keep locked up in my wardrobe you will find all the things you wore on the day I took you away. Your mother is sure to recognise them, for they are marked in her own handwriting."

"Pater," said Douglas Armstrong, "will it tire you very much to tell me how you managed to take me from my parents without their discovering your plot against them?"

"I will try and relate the story to you, as it is right that you should know it," returned Mr. Clementson, "although I must cut it as short as possible, for I feel I am losing strength rapidly. The facts of the case are simply these: I was determined to have my revenge on your mother for refusing to be my wife; and, seeing her devotion to you, I felt I could not find a better way of making her suffer than by parting you from her."

"For weeks I waited for a suitable opportunity, and at last one came. We were staying at Cyprus, where we had accidentally met. One day, while I was sitting with your mother in her drawing-room at the hotel where they were residing, a fearful storm began. She grew very anxious about you, as you were out with your nurse, and I told her I would go

and try and find you. I went; and as I had seen your maid a short time before taking you down the road that led to the sea, I took the same route. I quickly discovered you both trying to get shelter from the storm, which was terrific. It was the most awful hurricane that had ever been known there, and everyone was struggling to save themselves without one thought of helping those around them, so it was not wonderful that I could take you both away with me unnoticed."

"Before that day I had purposely made friends with your nurse, and I found her to be an innocent, trustful sort of girl, who could be easily led away and managed; and being very frightened at the storm I had little difficulty in persuading her to trust to my instructions. Taking her to an unfrequented part we took shelter in an empty house, and while there I bribed her to leave your parents and help me to abduct you."

"At first she would not listen to me, telling me it would break your mother's heart to lose you. But that argument only made me the more anxious to carry out my horrible plot. So I raised the sum I had offered her, and the temptation was too great, and she consented to do as I wished, and promised to remain in my service to take care of you; which she did, poor girl, for some years, when she died of consumption, and having no relations she was never inquired for."

"Well, as soon as it was dark I got her away from our hiding-place, and I took you both to a small hotel some miles off, where I knew the old landlord and his wife to be respectable people, as I had lodged with them at a previous date; and as they were Germans who could not speak a word of English, I felt sure your nurse Sarah Jones would not be troubled with too many questions."

"As I told the old souls I was a widower and had brought my maid and child to them to take charge of for a time, and paid them very handsomely in advance for their trouble, on condition they did not mention to anyone they were there, as I did not wish it known, I left you in their keeping, feeling sure you would both be taken care of, and that you would not be discovered, for the hotel was in a very out-of-the-way place, and scarcely larger than a village inn. I knew that my Germans were wise enough to follow out my orders, as they were very poor, and I did not spare my money."

"I also gave directions to Sarah not to take you out-of-doors at all until I saw her again, and she, poor girl, was far too timid to disobey me."

"That evening I went with your father to identify your cloak and a few other little things belonging to you, which I had taken the precaution to leave on the seashore saturated with water, and which I knew would be picked up, together with articles owned by other people who had been washed away—and that cloak convinced your parents that you and your nurse were both drowned; and although your father made every inquiry about you, you were not heard of any more, and your mother, being so ill, prevented him from seeking you much himself."

"I undertook to look for you instead, and each day I pretended to have traced out wrong people, till Mr. Armstrong told me to give up the fruitless search, as he felt convinced that you and Sarah had both been washed out to sea, and would never be heard of any more. With the deepest sympathy I agreed with him, and remained for some time longer in the neighbourhood to console him."

"At last I went away. Then I returned to the hotel where I had left you, and took you and Sarah by a steamer that started by evening for a seaport town some hundreds of miles from Cyprus, and remained there until Sarah died."

"By that time I had grown to love you as my own son, for, strange to say, I felt no bitterness towards you from your earliest childhood; and the fact of your looking at me with your mother's speaking eyes seemed to

draw me to you with an almost passionate devotion, and I could not bear you out of my sight."

"After Sarah's death I took you to Australia and gave you a good education at Victoria, and you will remember we remained there until you were nineteen, when I thought it would be good for you to travel about and see the world, which we did. But when I heard of poor Oliver McDonald's death I made up my mind to return to Fairlight Hall, and make you heir to the estate, which I have done, my boy; and I hope when you and Jasmine are married you will settle down there and keep up the old place for my sake; although I fear you won't care to remember me long when I am dead."

"Don't say so, pater," returned Douglas Armstrong, with feeling, "I shall always think of you with affection for your past kindness to me; and I shall ever regret that the terrible thirst for revenge should have caused you to commit so sad a sin, which must have destroyed all your happiness for the last twenty years, and which has caused your dying hours to be laden with misery."

"You are right," answered Mr. Clementson, sinking back on his pillows exhausted, for it had taken him a very long time to relate the story of his guilt, which he had only been able to do in broken sentences, but he could not be induced to rest until he had finished."

"Yes, you are right, Norman," he repeated feebly, "I am miserable, but I hope there is forgiveness even for me."

At that moment a carriage drove up to the door, and Reginald McDonald sprang out of it, followed by Mr. and Mrs. FitzGerald Armstrong—for Reginald had met them while travelling abroad, and had become great friends with them; and they had told him about the loss of their infant son, and how they had mourned for him ever since. And on finding that Reginald lived at Lake Crescent they asked him if he knew of a Mr. Clementson, who owned Fairlight Hall, and they were surprised to hear that he was Reginald's great uncle, and still more so to find Mr. Clementson had never returned to England for so many years."

They told Reginald of his uncle's supposed kindness to them at the time they had lost their child, but refrained from mentioning their instinctive dislike to him, feeling that it would not be good taste to do so; but they said they had never met him since, as they had not looked for him in any way, believing him to be in England, while they had retired to a small watering-place abroad, and lived there almost ever since, instead of settling down on the estate that had been left them, which at first they had intended to do, but which they had let for a lease of twenty-one years after they had lost their boy."

The lease was up, and they were determined to settle down, and try and take an interest in their property."

They gave Reginald McDonald their address, and a pressing invitation to come and see them as soon as he returned to England."

When Reginald heard his uncle's confession to Douglas Armstrong he lost no time in telegraphing to his friends to come to Silverdale immediately; and as they had fortunately returned home, they both started to obey the summons without delay, although they could not imagine what they were wanted for, as Reginald had not explained in the telegram for fear of raising false hopes for them. But he met the first train they could arrive by, and while they were driving up from the station he told them all he had heard Mr. Clementson say; and they all went to Eva Wallpole's house with beating hearts."

"Who is in that carriage?" inquired Mr. Clementson, starting up as he heard the wheels stop suddenly."

"It is Reginald and two strangers," said Jasmine, looking out of the window; and before she could promise to go and see who they were, the door opened, and Reginald

entered the room, followed by Mr. and Mrs. Armstrong.

"Has Heaven sent you?" asked the dying man, with agitated breath. "Thank Heaven you have come before it is too late. Douglas, there are your father and mother; Rhoda, there is your long-lost son, and in another second Douglas Armstrong was clasped in his parents' arms, and when they turned to speak to Mr. Clementson they found that he had fallen back—dead!

Six months later the bells of Silverdale church rang out merrily in honour of the wedding of Douglas Armstrong and Jasmine Wallpole, and there was only one sad heart among all that assembled at Mr. and Mrs. Wallpole's house to wish them happiness; and no one ever knew of the secret sorrow of that one, for Reginald McDonald was the gayest of all the guests, and so bright was he that even Mrs. Wallpole thought she must have made a mistake about his affection for her daughter.

[THE END.]

A CHRISTMAS GHOST.

—O—

It was just two nights before Christmas. Bedtime had come at Locust Grove. The fire was all safely covered up, the lights all out, and the doors all looked downstairs. Suddenly the young ladies, cosily gossiping on the hearthrug before a still-glowing blaze, were startled by a shriek and a shuffling of feet on the staircase without.

"Robbers! Let's hide in the cupboard," cried one. "Let's cover our heads up," said another. "Call papa," screamed a third. "Mercy!" ejaculated a fourth. "Sophy, don't open the door." "But I will open the door," answered Sophy, the boldest of the family; and, sure enough, she did.

There, with a comical expression of terror on his white face, with eyes staring and mouth open, stood Job Simpson the gardener.

"Ah, it's you, Job," said Sophy. "Where have you been so late? I'm afraid, on a visit to the pantry, and the deacon there," severely.

"I ain't been to no pantry, Miss—but I'm that skeered I can hardly speak. Who do you think I see jus' now? Your old grandpa come back this blessed night!"

"Nonsense!" cried practical Sophy.

"Well—well, miss," said the old man, "I were just creepin' round to see the kitchen fire were all safe, when I seed him come down the passage—see him in the moonlight clear as day. His face and very clothes all the same. I wur so skeered I yelled out. 'Taint first time I seed ghosts in the old place; but old master come back—who'd a thought it?"

Such was the outline of his tale, to which Old Job adhered in spite of the young ladies' smiles and mischievous cross-questioning, and which he told, with various additions, many a time afterwards to a kitchenful of awe-struck listeners.

"I see that Job would fain uphold the honour of our house," said Sue, with mock earnestness. "Hain't every old family a ghost?—or I'm sure it ought to have. And this house is a fine place for them, with plenty of hiding-corners outside and in. And, though they never appear to us degenerate faithless ones, why should they not to a staunch aristocrat like he is? Job, we thank you for this vindication of our dignity."

"Oh, hush!" said Sophy, quite gravely—Sophy, most sensible of all, yet with a heart big and tender enough to take in everyone's troubles, real or imaginary. "Why should we laugh at such things? Who knows?—But come, Job, I'll light you safely to your door. Come softly, now; my father must not be disturbed."

She went out into the dim corridor, lamp in

hand, as she spoke; and the old man, as he followed, muttered blessings on her gracious young heart.

There were no idle hands or heads at Locust Grove next day. There was a great slaughter of turkeys, ducks, and hens for the coming feast; a steady scolding from Mrs. Cullender, queen of the kitchen, as she scurried importantly to and fro; and wild excitement among the numerous dusky "small fry," the usual errand-runners and hangers-on of a country establishment. What a fire blazed and roared in the kitchen fireplace! What a fire-place it was, to be sure! What roasting and boiling were going on there to-day! What baking and stewing of daintier dishes! Nor were the young ladies themselves less busily occupied. There were Christmas evergreens to be put up. There were dresses to be arranged for the dinner-party next day, and for a dance later on during the holidays. Besides, each girl had some mysterious surprise of her own to carry out. Happiest, merriest of all was Sophy. For was not her own particular "Somebody" coming this evening, to stay all through the holidays? And were there not probabilities of all sorts of delightful times in store?

The short, busy, active day came to an end at last. The red lingering sunset faded, and a white moon shone clearly down on the white earth, the scintillating frost crystals of a traditionally appropriate Christmas Eve. About ten o'clock, a man might have been seen, under cover of the shade-trees on the lawn, approaching the house. He started perceptibly and paused a moment when he saw a light still shining from one of the lower windows. "Not such early hours now as they used to keep," he muttered. Then, cautiously drawing near, he looked in. A mass of drooping virginia creeper sheltered him overhead; inside, a projecting curtain shielded his face from observation. He bent eagerly as he gazed at the scene before him.

A blazing crackling fire ruddied the walls of the great square room, and lit up the faces of its inmates. All the girls were there. Pretty Sophy and saucy-looking Sue; Kate, the hoyden, deft-fingered and gay; slow pains-taking Alice; Annie and Cecilia, still in short dresses and undecided in face and figure; and another lady, tall and beautiful, yet somewhat sad of countenance, and with hair fast turning grey.

"I should have known her in a thousand," he whispered. "Always the same—the same."

For a moment his eyes were misty and blinded with tears.

"We must have one anthem—just one—before we retire," said Sue, in her clear voice. "Come, girls. Play for us, please, mamma."

"Ah!" breathed the listener, between his clenched teeth. "Mamma!" And so he must have her too, in addition to all the rest? A crowning joy of possession!

He panted as he spoke, as in a dumb impotence of passion, an ugly light in his eyes.

The tall lady shook her head and pointed to the clock. But, when the rest all joined with Sue, she yielded with a laugh, opened the piano, and began to play.

In a moment, they all gathered around her—six joyful though subdued young voices bursting into the Christmas hymn.

"Glory to God on high," they sang, "and on earth peace to men of good-will! We praise Thee! we bless Thee! we worship Thee! we glorify Thee! we give thanks to Thee for Thy great glory!" What a magnificent old anthem it is—the noblest-worded embodiment of supplication and praise. "Thou that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us! Thou that takest away the sins of the world, give us peace!" went on the clear sweet tones.

Perhaps the man outside had some sad memories connected with these words. He hid his face with a groan.

"I have been thinking," said Sophy, when the last "amen" had been uttered, the last

note had died away, "what a mockery for us to be singing so—'peace to men of good will'—when everyone knows what a shadow of strife and ill-will has hung over this house all our lives."

Sophy was tired and a little cross, perhaps, because Somebody had failed to come, as she had expected; and she spoke with some bitterness and an impatient gesture of the head.

"Why, Sophy! How can you talk so?" cried Kate, the excitable one. "As if it were papa's fault, when you know it was not he who began that dreadful quarrel. It takes two to make a reconciliation as well as a quarrel, remember. For my part, I think a good honest hatred is better than a make-believe show of peace; for the man who's so quick to forgive his enemies is quick to forget his friends. There!"

"Silly child, little you know of the real misery of such things as family quarrels," said the tall, grave lady, with a pained look into the fire; while Sophy added, somewhat doggedly,—

"But I shall always think that Uncle Frank was hardly used. No wonder he was bitter and resentful—no wonder. But come—we must be merry on Christmas-eve, and I have stumbled on the saddest subject of all. Don't mind what I said just now, girls; and—and—let's talk of something else."

In a little while, the lights were all out and the room deserted, and Sophy, beginning to undress, discovered that one of her favourite earrings was missing. Anxious to regain her treasure, she stole out of her room, candle in hand, to look for it in the parlour. On the stairway, a sudden draught put out her light. But, knowing where some matches were to be found, she hurried on, guided by the moon-shine which streamed through the great hall-window.

Suddenly, coming down the corridor in front of her, appeared a strange, shadowy figure.

For a moment, her heart gave a sick throb of fear and stood still.

With all her strong practical sense, she had always cherished, at night especially, a wholesome terror of ghosts—a feeling which may have been originally caused by too much listening to the grisly tales that negroes love to tell children.

Now Old Job's story, told the previous night, came to her mind. With the conviction that there was indeed a ghost in front of her—the white clothes, the light gleaming eyes, the grey hair and beard, the swift, noiseless tread, all answering the old man's description—a sudden terror fell upon her. She shrank back against the wall, and, closing her eyes, tried to scream. But no sound came from her parched lips.

"Hush!" said a voice, as a hand, unmistakably of flesh and blood, was laid on her shoulder. She looked up. "Child," went on the low strained voice, "I would not hurt a hair of your head. Come in here and let us speak together. What! afraid? I will not hurt you, dear. Come—come."

He drew her into the parlour and shut the door. Then he struck a match, proceeded to light one of the lamps, and suddenly turning to her, demanded:

"Have you ever seen my face before?"

Sophy started. It was a sallow haggard face, with a look of premature age. Yet it looked exactly like the portrait of her grandfather in the parlour. She knew, however, it could not be he; for, by this time, her proverbial common sense had come to her aid.

"It must be—Uncle Francis," she stammered, at last.

"Yes," he replied, "it is; and you must have a good memory to know me now, after all these years—changed as I am, and for the worse. What! you welcome me?" For she had flung her arms around his neck. "Dear child—dear child!"

He seemed quite touched and broken by her kindness, and, turning away with something like a sob, began to pace the floor. Presently,

he paused and came up to her, holding out with shaking hand a folded yellow paper.

"See this," he said, in an agitated whisper. "Do you know what it is? My father's last will and testament. Written a month before he died, and leaving me, his eldest son, my lawful inheritance. His will! Found where he left it, in a book; there, on that upper shelf of the bookcase. You are none of you great readers, niece—though *Hudibras* is a book, I fancy, nobody would read unless compelled, though it is witty enough. I owe the writer thanks for his not being popular—do I not? Will you read this document?"

Sophy took it from him, recognising at once her grandfather's handwriting, and read it through. It was concise and plain enough, carefully dated, and signed by the testator and by two witnesses, whose names in her hurry and nervousness, she could not decipher.

"It's a long story how I learned this fact," said her uncle, when she had done. "But I came here to prove its truth. And," hesitating, "to turn you all out of doors. Aye! and I could have done it an hour ago. But not now—not now. Do you know I was watching, listening, out there, to-night? I've no heart now to play the hawk, in a nest of such sweet birds. I'll go away unknown—as I came."

"No, no!" cried the girl. "It is only your right. And why should you give up so much for us? Oh, Uncle Francis, don't—"

He had lighted the paper at the lamp, meantime; and, in spite of her exclamation and her effort to snatch it away, now held it so till it was all consumed.

"Oh, sir!" sobbed Sophy, excitedly, "you ought not! It is generous, noble—but it is not fair to yourself. I, for one, will not accept the sacrifice."

He smiled a little.

"Is it such a sacrifice, after all?" he said. "Somehow, revenge on my brother has lost its pleasant savour. What would I want with his house and lands, knowing as I do now that the only woman I ever cared for is his wife? Yes, his wife," he added, "and bound to suffer in his poverty and his distress. No, no—keep our secret, Sophy. It was a foolish thing to tell you; and let me go as I came."

Sophy looked bewildered for a moment.

"The only woman you ever cared for?" she cried then. "My father's wife? Surely you know that my mother is dead, and that my father has never married again. Ah—now I see," springing up eagerly, with flushing cheeks. "It's Cousin Hester. You heard us call her—as we always do—mamma. Why I might have guessed it before!"

"Sophy," he said, earnestly, "no childish nonsense now. You think this still possible for me—me? Such a hardened reckless fellow as I have been?"

The sweet face was raised to his, the face like an angel's just then, and the kind, warm, impulsive arms were about his neck. "Possible?" she cried. "It is certain. Oh, uncle Francis, only come back."

They had a long talk together; each had much to tell; and twelve o'clock had struck before they said good-night. Then Mr. Francis Cresswell left the house, by the side entrance through which he had come in, and went to his lodgings in the village near by, while Sophy crept, half guiltily, though with joyful heart, to bed.

What a clear beautiful Christmas morning followed! With a rose-red sunrise resolving into clearest blue; with golden radiance across the snow; with a play of rollicking western winds; with all the stirring influence of a perfect winter day—it came. And what a ringing of merry voices, through all the rooms at Locust Grove! What an exchanging of gifts and good wishes!

Sophy was not the least gay, though there were signs of forced mirth, a stifled excitement about her that cousin Hester, noting, laid to the absence of that missing "Somebody."

After breakfast, when they had gathered around the fire, someone rallied Sophy on her

absent-mindedness. The girl looked up with a start. "I? Oh, I was only thinking," she said, "thinking of a story I heard some time ago."

"The old, old story, that Eden's bowers first heard," quoted Kate, mischievously. "Tell us about it, Sophy."

"If you really want to hear," said Sophy, tentatively. "Father, do you want to hear my story?"

"Ahem—well, I don't care, if it's not too long. Well, begin; but not more than ten minutes. I'm listening."

Mr. George Cresswell was a man of few words; small, pale, cold, and rather unhappy-looking. He leaned against the mantel, watch in hand, as he spoke, while Sophy, nervously smoothing her dress, with faltering voice and downcast eyes, began her tale. She told it simply, as a child might have done.

"There were once two boys, brothers," she said, "who lived in a pleasant old home in the country, something like ours, maybe. Their mother was dead, and their father loved the eldest son best, though people wondered at this, for he was wild, reckless, wayward, and of a roving turn. After they grew up, the eldest being away so much and always discontented at home, the father's love—perhaps because it was so great at first—seemed turned to hate; and, finding it so, the son, when he came back once from a long absence, said to his brother: 'You have stolen our father's heart away from me.' So they had a bitter quarrel, and the eldest went away again, vowing it was for ever. After some years, the father died, leaving all—the old home, the large estate—to his younger son."

Here Sophy faltered and paused.

"Go on," said Mr. Cresswell, in a low curious tone.

"Well, after this," said Sophy, "the younger son wrote kindly to the other, but received an angry reply, saying: 'You have cheated me out of my lawful rights, and now make offers of kindness; I am not the man to receive such kindness; I want nothing from you or yours.' And so the bitter feud went on and on."

"About a year ago, in a South American town, that older brother met a man, a former friend of his father, who told him that, ten years before, he had spent a night at the old home in Cornwall, and that the old gentleman had told him all his trouble with his sons, adding that he had written another will that very night, doing more than justice to the wandering child—in fact, leaving him nearly all. This will, which the man, Mr. Hardy, and one of the servants had signed as witnesses, the old gentleman laid away in a certain book in the bookcase, saying he would make it all safe and sure. The next morning, this Mr. Hardy left, and, a month afterward, heard that his old friend was dead."

Sophy paused a moment, then went on again. Everyone was listening intently.

"Can't you guess," she said, "how the elder brother hurried back to look for the will, and—as he thought—to take revenge? He came back to the neighbourhood under another name, and so changed that no one knew him. He came to the house, one night; but had forgotten his matches, and so had no light to begin his search. But the next night he tried it again. He came, however, before the family had retired. The windows were still alight. Looking in, he saw them, the people he had wanted to drive away, all so happy and peaceful inside, and he felt his heart broken within him; and—and it was Christmas-eve."

Her voice shook here with a sob, and she glanced up. The girls looked frightened, Cousin Hester was pale as death. Her father was silent and unmoved, but very stern. "Go on," he said at last.

"Oh, sir," cried Sophy now, "he did a brave and noble thing. He stole in when they were all asleep—all but one; he found the will, and burned it to ashes."

"Sophy, who told you this?" asked Mr. Cresswell, starting forward.

"Old Job's ghost," cried the girl, springing up, laughing and sobbing hysterically. "Yes, Old Job's ghost—poor Uncle Frank." And she related, rather confusedly, "I am afraid, the events of the previous night."

Half-an-hour later, the two brothers, side by side, came back together.

Even the thoughtless quick-seeing girls turned kindly from the greeting between Mr. Francis Cresswell and Cousin Hester. It was a very silent one. "Frank," she whispered, with trembling lips, while she could say nothing at all. She was calm, self-repressed—it seemed, even hard and cold. But he read that in her face which gave promise of happier days for him.

As for Sophy, whose sweet mediation had been the direct cause of all this, we may be sure that she did not miss her recompense of which the crowning point was reached when, in quite a flurry of blushing ardour, with many eager apologies for having missed his train and so failed to come the day before, who should arrive but her own dear Somebody? A. M. E.

FACETIÆ.

IMPROVING SLOWLY.—Jeweller: "Is your watch all right now, Mr. Smith?" Mr. Smith: "Well, no, not yet; but it seems to be gaining every day."

"ALAS!" said a moralising bachelor, within earshot of a witty young lady of the company, "this world is at best but a gloomy prison." "Yes," sighed the marvellous minx, "especially to the poor creature doomed to solitary confinement."

THREE of the admirers of a pretty Islington girl called on her the same evening, and as she answered the bell in person for the fourth call, she took the opportunity of hanging a placard on the door-bell: "This is my busy night."

AGREE: "How did George propose to you?" Nellie: "He rushed into the parlour the day after we had been introduced, flung £20,000 worth of bonds in my lap, kissed me eagerly seventeen times, and cried out: 'Darling, you must be mine!' So I became his."

HE: "Ah, Miss Filbert, I have just completed another poem." She: "Indeed, Mr. Peanut? How charming! What is the subject?" He (hopelessly): "The same old conceit, Miss Filbert; the same old conceit." She (sweetly): "Ah, an Autobiography, Mr. Peanut?"

SHE had refused him absolutely and thrown him overboard, but he persisted. "You are my queen," he pleaded; "have mercy on your poor, suffering subject. Won't you love me?" "No, I won't," she asserted, emphatically; "I mean just what I say too. I'm no pretender to the crown."

WHEN Sir George Rose was dining once with the late Lord Langdale, his host spoke of the very diminutive church in Langdale, of which his lordship was patron. "It is not bigger," said Lord Langdale, "than this dining-room." "No," returned Sir George, "and the living not half so good!"

RIGHT NAME FOR HIS ADORED ONE.—In speaking of the girl to whom he was engaged he referred to her as his "financée." "You mean your fiancée, I suppose? It is pronounced fee-ah-nay." "I don't care how it is pronounced; this girl is my fiancée. She is worth forty thousand pounds!"

SWETT'S JOKE.—"The candles you sold me last were very bad," said Swett to a tallow-chandler. "Indeed, sir, I am very sorry for that." "Yes, sir; do you know they burnt to the middle, and would then burn no longer?" "You surprise me! What, sir, do they go out?" "No, sir, no; they burnt shorter."

SOCIETY.

WINDSOR has hardly ever been more cheery, during the Queen's winter stay there, than since the arrival of the Empress Frederick! She had not been three days in England before the band's cheerful strains were heard again upon Castle Hill; for, deep as is her own grief, she never allows it to render others miserable. Her Majesty has been raised to a more equable level of spirits than was the case all the past year. Visits to the tombs are not encouraged, and instead, Her Majesty is hardly ever seen without the bright face of one granddaughter or another at her side.

The Empress Frederick accompanied her mother on a visit of condolence to Stafford House, the Queen and her daughter carrying with them wreaths to lay on the death-bed of their old friend, the Duchess of Sutherland, and afterwards sending fresher ones, for the day of the funeral, from the Castle. The Queen's floral offering on this occasion, and which Her Majesty laid on the bed beside the late Duchess with her own hands, was an exquisite cross of white lilies and maidenhair.

PRINCE ALBERT VICTOR, says *Modern Society*, receives the chronometer the late Kaiser was in the habit of using to the last; and we cordially trust it may serve to remind him, all his life, of what a good ruler should be like. To the Queen has been given the little ebony desk on which the dying Emperor wrote those "slips of paper," after his voice failed him, of which so much has been heard; and which anxiously must eternally breathe the spirit of his famous counsel to his son, "Learn to suffer without complaining!"

EVERYONE is rejoiced to see Princess Christian's familiar face driving once more about the streets and park at Windsor; but it is easy to tell that Her Royal Highness has suffered much during her late illness, and it is something unwonted, so early in the winter, to see her prefer a close brougham to the pretty open victoria she was wont to use, save in exceptionally bad weather. The Princess, it is stated, has had to endure several weeks of confinement in a darkened room; and her physicians strongly advise that she shall accompany the Empress of Germany when she goes to Italy early next year.

The marriage of Mlle. d'Harcourt with Comte Alexandre Oatire de Bioncourt, the other day, was a very brilliant affair; and all the Parisian *beau monde* were at the breakfast afterwards given by the Comtesse Duchatel, sister of the bride. The wedding-dress was of white and silver brocade, profusely trimmed with garlands of orange blossoms. The religious ceremony was performed by the Papal Nuncio in the Chapelle de la Nonciature.

MISS ELSPETH ANGELA CAMPBELL is, perhaps, one of the most beautiful girls in this country; and if we may credit the statement of a New York correspondent who was recently in England, Mr. Gladstone is one of that young lady's most ardent admirers. The ex-Premier is said to have declared that in Miss Campbell's features may be traced a revival of "the old Irish beauty" about which our forefathers were wont to rave. At the same time, the Grand Old Man told a story of a visit which he paid to Combe Hill Farm, the residence of Lord and Lady Archibald Campbell, some years ago. "Wee Angie" was then between eight and nine years old, and used to accompany Mr. Gladstone in his morning walks. On one occasion, after the pair had been discussing various matters, the young lady gravely remarked, "Mr. Gladstone, I hate your principles, but I love your dear old face."

The inhabitants of Lanowrie (in the Bombay Presidency) hit this year upon an excellent way of celebrating Guy Fawkes Day. They had a Baby Show in the morning, with a prize for the prettiest, healthiest, and best-dressed infant of the community.

STATISTICS.

FOOD-IMPORTS INTO THE UNITED KINGDOM DURING THE LAST TWENTY YEARS OR SO.—In 1867 we imported 248 lbs. per head of population of corn, grain meal, and flour; in 1887 we imported 425 lbs.; but in 1885 the amount 444 lbs.; and in 1876 446 lbs. In 1867 we imported 3.9 lbs. of dead meat; and in 1887 19.9 lbs.; but again in 1885 the amount was 20.7 lbs., and in 1880 24.5 lbs. Of sugar we imported 42 lbs. per head of population in 1867, and 76 lbs. per head in 1887. The total amount of dead meat of all kinds imported from Australasia in 1867 was 138,175 cwt.; and in 1887; 614,635 cwt.; from the Argentine Confederation 4,008 cwt. in 1867, and 264,524 cwt. in 1887; from Canada 61,959 cwt. in 1867, and 379,462 cwt. in 1887; from Germany, on the other hand, the amount was 417,983 cwt. in 1867, and only 397,930 in 1887, while the amount from the United States was 3,531,349 in 1867, and 4,294,765 in 1887. Thus, while the total amount of the trade has increased from 4,949,149 cwt. in 1867 to 6,573,866 in 1887, the greater portion of this increase has been shared between the United States, the Argentine Republic, the Australasian colonies, and Canada. It should be observed, however, that the year 1887 does not represent a maximum—this appears to have been reached in 1880, when the total amount was 7,566,681 cwt.; of which no less than 6,803,602, or more than the total amount for the year 1887, came from the United States, 144,377 cwt. from Australasia, only 3,193 cwt. from the Argentine Republic, 87,471 cwt. from Canada, and 355,330 cwt. from Germany.

GEMS.

Do not fret. It only adds to your burdens. To work hard is very well; but to work hard and worry too is more than human nature can bear.

The ultimate ground of any belief should be understood to be the fact that it can stand the freest possible discussion from every possible point of view.

Among the sources of these innumerable calamities which from age to age have overwhelmed mankind, may be reckoned as one of the principal, the abuse of words.

All principles cover small affairs. It does not follow that a scruple is contemptible because its object is diminutive. Is the principle of the microscope contemptible?

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

TOASTED CHEESE.—Cut equal quantities of Gloucester cheese, and having pared it into extremely small pieces, place it in a pan with a little milk and a small slice of butter. Stir it over a slow fire until melted, and quite smooth. Take it off the fire quickly, mix the yolk of an egg with it, and brown it in a toaster before the fire.

CURRIED RABBIT.—One rabbit, one large spoonful of curry-powder, half a dessert-spoonful of curry-paste, one large onion, one ounce and a half of butter, a rash of bacon, one large sour apple, a very little flour, and one pint of good stock. Cut the onion with the apple into slices, and fry them a nice brown in the butter; then stir in the curry-powder and paste, and pour in the broth or stock. Divide the rabbit, and cut the joints into rather small pieces, split the head, dredge it with flour, and add it to the other ingredients, with the slice of bacon cut into little square bits. Cover the stew-pan, set it over the fire, and let it stew gently for about three-quarters of an hour, or until the meat will leave the bones easily, and the sauce is thick. Pour off any fat, and serve it with boiled rice in a separate dish.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE CZAR'S CROWN.—The imperial crown of the Czar of all the Russias is the finest ever worn by a sovereign. It is in the form of a bishop's mitre, and carries on its crest a cross composed of five of the most beautiful diamonds ever cut, supporting the largest ruby in the world. Eleven great diamonds in a foliated arch, rising from the front and back of the crown, support this cross and ruby, and on either side is a hoop of thirty-eight pearls, than which there are no handsomer known.

MUSIC.—A large proportion of people have "no ear for music;" they can scarcely distinguish between a psalm and a march. Therefore, children should learn the elements of music as a science and an art; they should learn what notes stir the feelings, what rhythm is, what is melody, what is harmony, what is the relation of sound and sense, of movement and expression. Till they have learned so much, their education is neglected. Then, about one-fourth of them, having gotten thus far, should be able to see that they are not musicians, and never can be, and that they will become nuisances if they ever attempt to be.

TRUFFLES.—The truffle is a cryptogamic plant, having no visible means of fructification, and is found at all sorts of depths beneath the soil, from two inches to two feet. It possesses neither root, stem, nor leaf, and varies in colour from light brown to black. It is somewhat globular in form, ranges in size from that of a filbert to a large duck's egg, and weighs from two ounces to four pounds or more. Its surface is knobby or warty, and is covered with a skin which forms a sort of network of serpentine veins. Little is known of its early development as a vegetable production. In its native state it is found free from any attachment to any other body.

A PLEASANT CURE.—A well-known musician tells this story of an early experience: One day a lady, somewhat advanced in years, came to make arrangements for taking private lessons in singing. At the end of the second lesson the teacher felt constrained to tell her that her ear was not true. She received the remark very coolly, and at the next lesson sang as badly as before. "I am afraid," said the musician, "that you can never learn to sing in tune." "Oh, it doesn't matter," was the surprising reply. "Doesn't matter!" said the astonished teacher. "No," said the pupil. "I don't care anything about music, but my doctor said that singing would be the best thing for my dyspepsia, and so I decided to take lessons."

INSECTS IN THE EAR.—Writers say when an insect gets into the ear do not be frightened, but drown him with oil or warm water. There is no philosopher, remarks Dr. J. Herbert Claiborne, Jr., in the *Medical Classics*, who could sit unmoved with an earwig or fly beating a tattoo upon his ear drum. Yes, be frightened, for it will facilitate your movements. Sweet oil is perhaps the best thing to keep him from moving—that is the first desideratum. The oil, by its thick consistence, will so entangle and bedraggle its legs and wings that the intolerable noise will be stopped. If oil be not at hand, use any liquid that is not poisonous or corrosive. Water will probably be within the reach of every one. This is also more liable to float him out, too, than either sweet oil or glyceride. It has been suggested to blow tobacco smoke into the ear to stupefy the insect. We cannot indorse this advice: tobacco smoke blown into the ear of a child has been known to cause alarming symptoms. When the movements of the intruder have been arrested, syringe the ear gently with warm water. All manner of insects have been found in the ear, but you can never tell in a given case who the rude caller is knocking at the door of your brain till you have him out.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

STUDENT.—1. Enoch was the father of Methuselah. 2. "House" is first found in the Bible in Genesis xix. 3.

W. W. F.—Warm turpentine rubbed over old paint with a coarse cloth or a stiff brush will remove it—ready for fresh paint.

HARRY.—Apprenticeship indentures, where there is no premium, require half-crown stamp. It is best to use the Stamp Office form.

B. M.—A will does not need a stamp, but must be signed by the testator in the presence of two witnesses. All three must be present together.

MINNIE.—You could probably learn to write on a typewriter; but, to pursue the business of type-writing successfully, a person needs at least a good common school education, and that, it seems, you unfortunately have not.

C. S. W.—1. In February, 1888, Lord Stanley succeeded the Marquis of Lansdowne as Governor-General of Canada. The latter is now Governor-General of India. I. Michael Eugene Chevreul, the eminent French chemist, is still living, and lately celebrated his 102nd birthday.

G. G. W.—Give the parents of your affianced an honest statement of your finances, and thus show them that their daughter is not in danger of linking her fortunes with a man who will be unable to support her in proper style. They are not to be blamed for counselling her to wait until you have accumulated a little money, as she is their only child, and they are therefore desirous to see her comfortably and properly fixed in life. After thus giving an insight into your affairs, they will doubtless agree to the marriage.

A. D. V.—Coloured glass is made by mixing the molten material with metallic oxides. Ruby-coloured glass is produced by oxide of gold; the finest amber shade by oxide of silver; blue, by oxide of cobalt; purple, by oxide of manganese; green, by oxide of iron or copper; canary-colour, by oxide of uranium. Cobalt is possessed of such a great colouring power that a quarter of an ounce of its oxide will give a blue hue to half a ton of melted glass. To render glass opaque or not transparent, phosphate of lime (burned bones) and common arsenic are added to the mixture while in a liquid state.

C. C.—Perhaps he had good cause to be jealous of the attentions of your cousin; at any rate, it was a very trivial reason for quarrelling with him. If this line of action was taken by every loving couple, we would soon see thousands separated. But the majority of young ladies recognise the fact that jealousy is a natural concomitant of love, and seldom, if ever, allow their anger to cause a rupture of the blissful relations existing prior to the exhibition, on the part of either, of such a feeling. Do not repel his advances, but bury the foolish resentment, and allow the course of your love to flow again smoothly along like a placid stream.

T. R. A young woman working away from home, says the junior brother of her employer visited their town lately, and while there paid her some attentions—perfectly respectful and open—taking her to church, &c. When going away he asked permission to correspond with her, and she gave a partial consent. "What shall I do?" she asks. Since the young man seems interested in you in an honourable way, you could not be doing wrong to answer his letter, if it was in the same respectful tone as his manner to you. Reply in a sprightly but modest way—show no eagerness to get on tender ground; and pay heed to your spelling and your capitals. The most harmless face powder is known as the very best violet powder. Magnesia is not good as a face powder.

M. N. says her young girl friend, sixteen years old, was left an orphan not long ago. She has no guardian, but she is aware of it. She lives with her married brother, whose wife makes her feel as though she were dependent, though she works out when not at school, helps about the house, &c. What shall she do? You should choose a guardian if the law has not appointed one for you. Apply to the surrogate of your county. If you live with your brother—which is best, as you are so young—have a business understanding with him about your board. Tell him you wish to understand your position. You do not wish to be dependent, or to be made to feel so. You are willing to pay for your board. Have it understood in what way it is to be paid. A girl is not legally of age until she is twenty-one.

Jessie F. is a Spanish blonde, fair, pale, with dark eyes and brown hair—of which she sends a curl—of perfect gold tint, soft as silk. Jessie seems to glory in her reputation as a flirt. She has engaged herself to five young men, each in a different town. All are of good family, and every way eligible, and she declares she cares for them all alike—"I love one just as well as another. And now, what must I do?" Don't ask us, Jessie. A girl who is engaged to five young men, and who loves them all fervently, one just as much as another, is a problem outside our comprehension. We give it up. Ten are not a flirt, for a flirt doesn't love, only plays at love, and she is usually too smart to compromise herself by a promise, or else too honourable to make a serious pledge she has no intention of redeeming. If you really want to marry one of those eligible young men, choose him somehow. Put the written names of all five in a bag and "draw" one out. Then dismiss all the other lovers as best you can, and stand firm by the lucky youth—if you can. We can't help telling you we wouldn't like to be in his shoes. Not even for the sake of her gold, silk hair, and lily skin would we like to possess a wife with such elastic affections.

FANNY.—1. If the gentleman is generally called "Professor," it would be better to use that title in the address. 2. It is not "necessary" for ladies to give their *fancied* Christmas presents, but they usually do. In order to make presents that "would answer the purpose," they should study the tastes, habits, and surroundings of their betrothed.

R. S. V.—Rouse yourself, and make an effort to keep your wife and children. A man who dwells on failure with discontent condemns himself of littleness. We can not be masters of ourselves till our sovereignty has been challenged and proved. The salutary shock comes on this side and that, and the courageous sufferer is taught the wealth of his resources.

BOOKWORM.—At your age you must not dream your life away. Remember he that studies only men will get the body of knowledge, without the soul; and he that studies only books, the soul without the body. He that, to what he sees, adds observation, and to what he reads adds reflection, is in the right road to knowledge, provided that in scrutinising the hearts of other men he does not neglect to scrutinise his own.

PAT MOLLOY.—1. The birthplace of St. Patrick is uncertain. A manuscript in the British Museum asserts that he was born at "Bonavens Tibernie," supposed by some to be the site of the modern Boulogne. Others affirm that he was born in Kilpatrick, in Scotland. He was twice in his youth carried captive to Ireland by marauders, and twice escaped. About 490 he began his missionary work in Ireland. 2. Yes; it is proper quietly to hand the handkerchief to the lady.

THE BRIDE.

WHENEVER I read of a wedding,
With a bride that is young and fair,
With the sheen of lace on her bosom,
And orange-flowers in her hair;
A corded silk, and a long square train,
A white bouquet, and a fan,
With bridesmaids in pale sash gowns,
And the bridegroom, and the "best man";

When I read of the tears and blushes,
The love, the vows, and the ring,
The prayers and congratulations,
The blessings, and everything;
I sigh, and I sigh as I wonder
What the fate of that bride will be,
As she launches into the future—
Careless, and happy, and free.

Yea, free! But how soon will that freedom
Yield to the cares of a wife?
How soon will the smiles and the blushes
Give place to the burden of life?
How soon will the vows be forgotten,
And only the ring remain!
To recall the dreams of her girlhood
That were only dreamed in vain?

Her bosom will hold many heartaches,
And her eyes will hold many tears,
Her smiles will grow fewer and fewer,
Her cares will increase with her years;
The flowers will die on her bosom,
The light will slip out of her eyes,
And the heart that was once full of music
Will be the birthplace of sighs.

So whenever I read of a wedding,
With its sunshine and its showers,
Its love, and its vows, and its blessings,
Its music, and its flowers;
I know that the sighs and the heartaches
Will come to that fair young life,
For she will be never—no, never,
A bride again—but a wife.

E. H.

DOLLY, fair, rosy, and brown-eyed, asks what colour and material should be her new walking suit. Lady's cloth or Henrietta is the best and most serviceable material. A myrtle-green or a yellow-brown Henrietta cloth, made either with a basque trimmed with velvet, cuffs and collar of a darker shade; or, if you want something in the Directorate or Empire style, make the skirt full and plain, and have the waist either gathered or else plain, and finished with plaited folds that come from the shoulders, cross on the breast, and disappear under a wide sash of soft sash silk the same shade of the dress. Your writing is very good, a little stiff, and lacking in ease and grace. Grammar and spelling good.

T. R. N.—Of course we, as all the rest of the world, have heard all about the creams, balms, and lotions made by the lady you speak of, and have often seen them used. The cream is good for a chapped or rough skin, but so is nice pure lard or sweet milk. You can make as good a cream as you need by taking some sweet lard, a piece of fresh mutton tallow, a little white wax, and a phial of almond or olive oil. Melt them together in an earthenware vessel, strain through muslin, beat up, as you would an egg, until it gets cold. When nearly cold you can add some perfume—a few drops of rose or violet essence. Wash your face every night before going to bed in moderately cold water, wipe dry, and rub a little of the cream over it. No healthy skin should be ever "doctored" at all, any more than a healthy stomach. Chapped or tanned or eruptive skin may have treatment, but doctoring a healthy skin with creams and balms, &c., will make it yellow and shrivelled. The horribly wrinkled "hags" one sees in the streets often owe their wrinkles to dirt and the grease they anoint themselves with.

DENNER.—Cuisine is a French word, and is pronounced as if spelt *kwee-zen*. It means kitchen.

W. J. G.—Allan Cunningham, born in 1785, died in 1842, wrote the ballad beginning,—

"A wet sheet and a flowing sea,
And a wind that follows fast,
And fills the white and rustling sail,
And bends the gallant mast."

W. G. W.—1. A dreadful massacre took place in Paris, September 2 to 5, 1792, during which prisons were broken open and the prisoners butchered. Some accounts give the number of victims as 1,200, others as 4,000. The agents of this horrible slaughter were called Septemberists, or Septemberists. 2. December 31, 1800, fell on Wednesday.

L. M. O.—When encountering sharp winds, persons of weak lungs should keep their lips tightly closed, and breathe through their nostrils. This suggestion will prevent many hacking coughs and sore chests. To prevent chapping of the skin, add an ounce of the tincture of benzoin to half a pint of distilled water. Perfume to taste, and apply night and morning, and after every ablution.

R. R. R.—As your sister grows older she will probably conquer the feeling of bashfulness which now acts as a drawback to her progress in society. She should keep well posted in all the current topics, by reading and observation, and so acquire a fund of conversation that will enable her to forget herself or her fancied shortcomings, while thus affording entertainment to those with whom she comes in contact.

S. J.—The Red Indians regarded the Indian summer as a gift of their most honoured deity, the god of the south-west, who sends the south-west winds, and to whom they believed their souls to go after their death. The Indian summer usually occurs over the northern portion of the United States after the autumnal storms, and continues often without interruption two or three weeks. During its continuance a peculiar business lull fits the atmosphere.

ANXIOUS MOTHER.—Do your utmost to make your little ones happy. It is hardly possible to overstate the blessing of a happy childhood. It is worth while to make any proper sacrifice in order to store the memory of children with happy days. The family picnic, the steamboat excursion, the children's party, the occasional gift, are delights that do not cease when the little tired head sinks on the pillow at night; they live again in the character of the joy-inspiring man, they shine in the pleasant countenance of the merry old grandfather.

REUBEN.—It is not the practise of well-bred young women, and men know it, and would not dare offer to kiss a young woman they held in highest respect. A man will ask to kiss any girl whose manner leads him to believe she will grant the familiarity. He will respect her more if she refuses, or, better still, if she deports herself with such sweet dignity that he will not dare ask her until he is her accepted lover. You are a blond. Any pretty fancy article that you can make—a plush handkerchief-case or a handsome pin cushion, will be a nice gift to your young friend.

A. C.—1. Contraband commerce is that which is carried on contrary to the laws of the country. Contraband goods are articles which are either wholly prohibited, or only permitted to be imported or exported on certain conditions. Goods or effects subject to customs or excise duty, smuggled in or put on the market without payment of such duty, are contraband, and, on seizure, liable to be forfeited. 2. "Contents unknown" is a phrase which occurs in bills of lading, wherein the captain, although receipting for cases of merchandise as marked, disavows any acknowledgment of the kind or quantity of goods contained in them. 3. An open account is a running account on a merchant's books, of debits or credits with an individual or firm.

M. V. says that a young man who "belongs to the highest circles, and is every way unexceptionable," is seemingly captivated by her charms, as he blushes whenever he meets her, and walks by her house several times a day, looking up at the window to catch her eye, yet not bowing or in any way presuming. She is interested in turn, and would like to make his acquaintance. What shall she do? If this eligible man can not find a way to become acquainted with so willing a young lady, then he is either timid as a mouse, or else not very much smitten, after all. You can only look as pretty and pleasant as possible when he passes the window on his diurnal peregrinations. This will show him, if he is not hopelessly obtuse, that "Barkis is willin'."

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